DEPICTION OF WOMEN IN ART AND LITERATURE DURING THE MUGHAL PERIOD

ABSTRACT
THESIS

SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

Doctor of Philosophy

IN

HISTORY

By

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ALIGARH-202002 (INDIA)

2014

ABSTRACT

Women are an integral part of society. In medieval Indian history women played an important role in the society. There was a wide range of activities opened for women and so their role was very crucial. The meager availability of artifacts, particularly related to craft and production technology of the period, greatly reinforces the worth of Indian paintings largely wall paintings, classical Indian sculpture, Mughal, Rajasthani and Pahari miniatures. Alongside in the absence of detailed literary evidence on the women's life and their work, pictorial depictions assume great significance to reconstruct their history.

Indian sculpture can be referred to as the mirror of Indian's fascinating history of the ancient time. Bringing about a reflection of religious beliefs, their dresses, ornaments and social customs, these sculptures offer beautiful records of centuries and provide an aesthetic continuum that extends from the early civilization to Mughal period

The human figures become the main subject matter for the artists in the present period. Most of the figures were sculptured in stone. These sculptures depict many scenes like before the birth of Gautama his mother Maya Devi saw a dream in which a divine elephant descended from the *Tushita heaven* (residency of Devine being) and entered her womb. There are also beautiful figures of Yakshi and Gaja Lakshmi. Gates of Sanchi stupa are lavishly carved and depict a Yakshi of the conventional female form. The Amravati sculptures are very vigorous, full of movement, vibrating with life and energy and charming in every detail. Some jataka story is sculptured in Mathura school of art. The human figure became the main subject matter for the artists in the Gupta period.

The material culture that is depicted in the Ajanta cave paintings is extremely helpful for the study of women. The artist displays a command of the technique of foreshortening and is fully familiar with the principles of perspective. Ajanta's creative genius lies in the portrayal of women. The lovely ladies of the court with their handmaids, the dancers and the musicians, the devotees, the common women and even the beggar girls are all drawn with brilliant zest and extraordinary knowledge.

Sources of ancient period depict the life of women in society. These sources are rich in material for the social and cultural life of women. In ancient Indian texts women are generally treated as a uniform category. In ancient age, women enjoyed all the religious rights and privileges which men possessed. Her presence and co-operation were regarded necessary in religious rites and ceremonies.

By the eleventh century the Buddhists in the monasteries of eastern India and the Jains in the west and south and began to illustrate some of their religious books. The manuscripts of eastern India depict scenes from the Buddha's life. The goddess Prajnaparamita and Manjusri are also important figures in these paintings.

There are little palm leaf and, later, paper manuscripts, about the lives of Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, and of his other incarnations. No Jain illuminated book has been found so far can be dated earlier than the eleventh century. The Kalpasutra is the most important canonical work of the Jains. The Kalpasutra contains more than the sacred percepts or monastic rules. Dancers and musicians, devotees and monks fill the border decoration of every page. The female figure is treated artistically. The manuscript paintings of western school depict figures of nuns, scene of Mahavira birth, Queen Trisala and birth of Neminatha etc.

Malwa paintings of the seventeenth century derived its popular themes to the Sultanate period. The subject of Malwa illustrations are the *Ragmala*, the *Krishnalila*, the *Nayikabheda*, the *Durgapatha* etc. The *Rasikpriya* miniatures reveal a number of characteristics. Typical regional dress, including the extremely short *choli* (bodice) on the women is shown. The *Nayikabheda* tradition realized the hero and heroine by identifying them with Krishna and Radha respectively. The traditional knowledge of portraying love illustrations was fully utilized in the Nayikabheda paintings of the Malwa School, but was considerably modified, according to the requirements of the individual series. Besides illustrating love poetry and musical modes, Malwa paintings also fulfilled the pious needs of Hindu gentry.

All the paintings of Mughal Rajasthani and Pahari School provide us a visual record of the social life of the time. This record cannot naturally be either comprehensive or consistent. Moreover, the emphasis is heavily on aristocratic life and pursuits. Here I shall try to bring out certain details of social life and manners depicted in the miniatures. There are large number of Mughal paintings depict that the women of

Mughal harem arranged dinner party, excursion, marriage feasts, picnics, garden parties, drinking and drug parties and birthday celebrations. The Muslim women observed *parda* with greater rigidity than the Hindu ones. Paintings show strict *parda* for the harem women. The ladies of royal harem did not have any work to do. Therefore, they participated in many games. These games were not only indoor but also outdoor. These women played various games such as hide and seek, playing polo, *chaupar*, chandal mandal and hunting etc.

Like Rajput painting of Rajasthan, the main matter of Pahari painting is book illustration of *Ramayan, Mahabharat, Gita Govinda, Ragmala, Rasikpriya* etc. but individual miniatures depicting scenes of the royalty and commoners also occur the scenes of cooking, dancing and marriage celebration etc. These paintings furnish a rich data, which is useful for a social historian about dress, fashions, religion, climate, cultural trends, in deals of beauty, pleasure etc. of an age in which painting is drawn. Rajasthani paintings are rich in source material of celebration of various festivals such as Holi, Diwali, Teej etc.. In Rajasthan the celebration of Diwali is specially charming and colourful. Marriage was celebrated with great pomp and show. Some of the Rajput customs are so curious ad different.

Rajput and Pahari both type of paintings prove that various kinds of intoxicants were used during this period. Taking of opium, drinking of wine, bhang and smoking were prevalent during this period. Tobacco gained popularity in Rajasthan since its introduction at the Mughal court. There were certain recreated games indoor and outdoor in which aristocrats and common people took part directly or indirectly. Gambling with dice, chess, *chaupar, pachisi, chauser* and *chandal mandal* were popular games in women during that period.

Women especially of the aristocratic classes remained behind the *parda*, it was a sign of status. They continued observing the practice even to their old age. A Muslim girl starts observing *parda* when she attain the age of puberty. It was observed by all class of the Muslim community except the peasant women and other working classes. The women of aristocracy moved in palkis or dolis, which were heavily covered. The women of higher Hindu classes followed suit and started observing the same custom.

The women worked for both skilled and unskilled professions. This is proved by the depiction of women in the Mughal paintings. They were not only confined to the

household work but opted many other professions as well. The women were employed not only in harem but also in the field and craft works. These paintings depict that the women of Mughal period were active. They did all type of works as weaving, painting, spinning, carrying material for buildings, cooking, dancing, singing, playing various musical instruments and washing clothes etc. Women were involved in agriculture also.

The chores that women performed in the household such as preparing food, nursing children and helping their men folk in all manners of ways should not be ignored. In Mughal India women's work has been physically very demanding. The miniature of Mughal period shows women participation in building industry. An important role was played by women as midwives and nurses of babies.

Singing and dancing was very popular profession of women. This profession was carried out by women who worked as public entertainers. These entertainers used instruments like drums, bells etc. Many times they were used for entertainment of guests by playing instruments, dancing and singing. Musicians and dancers were an integral part of court life in the Mughal period.

Women must have also taken up the profession of painting. Contribution of women in the field of painting is remarkable. Some women painters were also there i.e. Nadira Banu, Ruqaiya Banu, Nini and Sahifa Banu. A woman artist has been depicted in a Ragmala painting of the Mewar School drawn by artist Sahbdin Nini a court artist of the reign of Jahangir copied her work from an Italian painting. Ruqaiya Banu, a woman painter is known from a single miniature of Safavid School.

The Mughal sources describe the glorious life of princesses, queens and other ladies of the royal Mughal harem. These Mughal women were beautiful, educated and extremely talented. Their contribution in the field of society, culture, literature, art and economy is also remarkable. The place of women was always respectable in Mughal society. The first lady of the realm was emperor's mother except in the case of Nur Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal.

Mughal emperors loved their girls a lot. The daughter of the Mughal family or the Mughal princesses occupied an important place in the royal Mughal harem. The girl

received their primary education in the same school where the boy read. Higher education was mostly confined to the upper class.

In imperial families marriages were solemnized when the girls completed the age of thirteen or fourteen. The prevalent system of child marriage was not admirable. Unmatched marriages were practiced during the Mughal period. Polygamy was prevalent among both the upper and lower classes of Mughal society, though ordinarily it was not encouraged. Babur had married seven wives. Akbar was himself polygamous yet he was a great supporter of monogamy. Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb were also polygamous and married to many women. The practice of concubines was prevalent among the richer sections of Muslim society.

The ladies of Mughal harem owned a lot of wealth and money. They could spend this according to their wish. Important ladies of the Mughal household owned vast *jagirs* bestowed upon them by the emperor. These ladies participated actively in the economic scenario of the Mughal age. Some prominent ladies like Mariyam uz Zamani, Jagat Gosain, Nur Jahan Begum and Jahan Ara Begum took an active interest and participated whole heartedly in the prosperous trade and commerce of that time.

Some paintings and literary accounts of Mughal period also provide valuable information about the life of ordinary women. The women of poor class acted as housewife, labourer, carrying water, churn buttermilk etc. They could move freely and did not observe *parda*.

The custom of *Sati* and *Jauhar* was also prevalent in Mughal period. *Sati* is an ancient custom. According to this system a widow burnt herself with the dead body of her husband. Usually she was expected to follow her dead husband to the other world by immolating herself on the funeral pyre of her husband. The custom of *Jauhar* was confined to the Rajputs. They burnt themselves when their husbands have been killed.

Present study presents something of Indian women. It also presents picture of gender division of labour and harmony in every aspects of socio-cultural and economic trends. It was an age of enlightenment, advancement, peace and amity. Women worked with men together in creating wonders in every art and made India a paradise on earth.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis, **"Depiction of Women in Art and Literature During the Mughal Period"**, by **Ms. Kalpna Chaudhry** is her own original work. I consider it is suitable for submission to the examiners and for the award of the **Ph.D. Degree.**

(Prof. Tariq Ahmed)
Supervisor

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*First and foremost, I thank the most benevolent and merciful for blessing me with the streng**"Almighty God"** th and patience for the completion of this thesis.*

*I feel privileged to have been able to complete my Ph.D. thesis with **Professor Tariq Ahmed** as supervisor. I express to him my deepest sense of gratitude, for his excellent guidance, constructive criticism and keen interest in this work.*

*It is my primary duty to express my heartfelt gratitude to **Professor S. P. Verma** who upheld this very interesting research and virtually inspired me to this much, not only excellent guidance, but fall the moral encouragement and support which he provided to me throughout.*

*I would be like to express my sincere thanks to all the **teachers** of the department for their constant encouragement in this endeavor.*

I am very grateful to the staff of various libraries, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi; National Museum, New Delhi; Raza Library, Rampur; American Institute of Indian Studies, Gurgaon; Sawai Man Singh II Museum, Jaipur; State Museum, Jaipur. Special thanks are due to the staff of Maulana Azad Library, A.M.U. Aligarh and the Library staff of the Research Seminar library, Department of History, A.M.U. Aligarh for their help and cooperation.

I am under a great obligation to the University Grants Commission for awarding Research fellowship, which kept me away from financial constraints.

*My vocabulary fails to express my sincere feelings to my adorable parents, my brothers, **Rajesh** and **Ashish**, my sister, **Sapna Chaudhary,** my little daughter **Raunak,** son **Kostub,** and my husband **Munendra Singh** for their love, support and encouragement, their blessings and belief in me is the base of my every success.*

*I am highly thankful to dearest friends **Amita Singh, Neelam Pandey, Sushma Sharma, Indu Upadhyay, Majida Umar Khan, Fareed Ahmad, Javed Naseem,** as they have provided me with the full strength of their help and support.*

With all faith in Almighty, I place this work in the hands of my examiner with the hope that he will bear with the shortcomings that might have crept into this thesis inadvertently.

Kalpna
(Kalpna Chaudhry)

CONTENTS

LIST OF PLATES

19. Arya Suvrata, Renouncing the world and other scenes, dated 1439, Folio from Kalpasutra painted at Mandu, western Indian School, National Museum, New Delhi.
20. Worship of Parsvanatha, Folio from a Kalpasutra Manuscript, Gujarat, c.1350.
21. Instruction by Monks, Folio from a Kalpasutra Manuscript, Gujarat, c.1350.
22. Kosha Dance before the Royal Archer Kalpasutra Manuscript, Gujarat or Rajasthan, 1475-1500, from the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, Museum Associates Purchase M 72.53.16.
23. Birth of Mahavira, Kalpasutra Manuscript, Gujarat or Rajasthan c. 1500 from the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, Museum Associates Purchase M. 72.53.12.
24. Neminath's Birth (left); Neminath's Renunciation (right), Kalpasutra Manuscript, Gujarat or Rajasthan, 1502, From the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, Museum Associates Purchase M. 72.53.11.
25. Raja Surata and Samadhi the Vaisya, Wait upon the Goddess (A scene from the DurgaPatha) c. 1680 A.D. Bharat Kala Bhavan, Acc. No.1412.
26. Lalit Ragini, from a Ragmala series, c. 1650 A.D. Bharat Kala Bhavan, Acc. No. 7466.
27. Asavari Ragini, from a Ragmala series, c. 1650 A.D., Bharat Kala Bhavan Acc. No. 7475.
28. The Love stricken Gopi, An illustration from KasavaDasa'sRajkapriya, c. 1670 A.D., Bharat Kala Bhavan, Acc. No. 449.
29. Lady Adorning herself in a Mirror, Illustration to the Musical mode, Vivala Ragini, Malwa, Central India, c. 1630, British Museum, 1924-12-28-03.
30. Balarama Bathing with Milkmaids, Illustraiton to the tenth book of the Bhagavata Purana, Malwa, Central India dated 1688, Gopi Krishna Kanoria Collection, Calcutta.
31. Lovers at Night, Illustration to the Indian Musical mode, Varari Ragini, Malwa, Central India, c. 1860, Gopi Krishna Kanoria Collection, Calcutta.
32. The lady and the lotus, Illustration to the Indian Musical mode, Malasri Ragini, Malwa, Central India, c. 1640, Collection of the Late J.P. Losty, London.
33. Lovers approaching A Bed Chamber Illustration to the Indian musical mode, MalwaRagini, Malwa, Central India, c. 1680, Victoria and Albert Museum (I.S. 66-1952).

34. The Marriage procession of Dara Shikoh Oudh, provincial Mughal, circa A.D. 1740-50, Artist Haji Madani, Acc. No. 58.58/38 from a private collection.
35. Babur celebrates in Kabul the birth of Humayun f. 295a, Baburnama, British Museum.
36. Celebration of the birth of Salim, attributed to Lal, Akbarnama, c. 1603-05, Chester Beatty Library, London.
37. Jahangir celebrates Holi, attributed to Govardhan, Minto Album, c. 1615-20, Chester Beatty Library, London.
38. Parviz and women c. 1620-25 Goverdhan, Minto Album, Chester Beatty Library, London.
39. Chand Bibi playing Chaugan or Polo, Deccan, Golkonda, Late 17th century collection Acc. No. 63.1378, National Museum, New Delhi.
40. Laila and Majnun at School. By Dharm Das, from a *Khamsa* of Amir KhusrauDihlavi Manuscript, Mughal, dated 1597-1598, Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore M. 624, f. 98r.
41. The young Akbar pays respects to his mother who rides in a litter, from an *Akbarnama*, Mughal 1590s, Raza Library Rampur, Album 4, fol. 8a.
42. Madhu madhavi, Ragini, Mewar School, Rajasthan, c. 1750, Private collection.
43. Hindola Raga, Mewar School, Rajasthan, c. 1750, Private collection.
44. Raja Balwant Singh of Jammu listening to musicians at Jasrota, painted by Nainsukh, Jammu Lahoere Museum No. G.34 (050-G1920).
45. BangaliRagini : A girl at a shrine, Mughal style in Rajasthan, c.1630.
46. Krishna and his wife Rukmini Greet Balarama and His wife Revati after their wedding Isarda school, Rajasthan, c. 1690, collection of Dr. Alvin O. Bellak.
47. A woman making qababs, c. 1680 Chester Beatty Library London.
48. Women at village well, c. 1570, Detail from *Hamzanama* illustration, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, I.S. 1510-1883.
49. Washer man and wife, *Anwar-i-Suhaili*, 1597 A.D. Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi No. 9069, f. 160, upper part of the Miniature.
50. Workman Building Red Fort Agra. Second half of preceding illustration (No. 46/117), Masons, stone cutters, water carriers, women laborers, sailors, hawkers, etc.
51. Birth of Jahangir, Attributed to Bishan Das, from a *Jahangirnama* manuscript, Mughal, ca. 1620.

ABBREVIATIONS

Ain	Ain-i-Akbari
Anwar	Anwar-i-Suhaili
A.I.I.S.	American Institute of Indian Studies, Varanasi
B. Nama	Baburnama
B.K.B.	Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi
B.M.	British Museum & Library, London
Khuda Baksh	Khuda Baksh Library, Patna
R.R.	Raza Library, Rampur
Razm	Razmnama
Tarikh	Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Timuria
Tuzuk	Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri
V & A	Victoria and Albert Museum, London

INTRODUCTION

Paintings are relatively a new source from which much valuable information can be gleaned for the material culture of Indian history from ancient to Mughal India. Through the years of successive reigns, these paintings came to represent a mass of evidence for the material culture as well as the social and cultural history of Mughal India.

Art is a mirror of society. In other words, it is a visual commentary on women's life and her activities: and it is possible to reconstruct the history of material culture of the people in enriched and vivid form from the pictorial art, i.e. sculpture, cave paintings and illustrated manuscript paintings. In view of the vast store of information on our past that comes from the written sources, we tend to forget that pictorial depictionspreceded pictographs and ideographs, the early form of writing.

In the present thesis an attempt has been made to study life of women and their contribution to the society and culture from Ancient to Mughal times. The emphasis of the thesis is on the study of their social condition through their representation in sculptures and paintings and of course, the textual evidences. It thoroughly presents a picture of a working woman and gives information about their pastimes, social and economic condition during the period. The centre focus of my study is the women of Mughal India. Some work has been done on social condition of women of Mughal India, but no systematic study has been made till date. This thesis is a humble attempt to fill this lacuna in our studies. The study is largely based on paintings, as well as on contemporary textual evidences.

First of all, without almost any previous warning, came the wall paintings of Ajanta, with their breath taking mastery of colour and line. Here women appear to us in devotion and at work, affected by all varieties of emotion. Despite much willful and natural destruction, enough remains of these paintings remain to tell about the real life of the times what we would have never learnt from any other source. The sculptures in ancient Indian history represent the best examples of cultural continuity. The women figures are excellent. These exhibit the skills of the sculpture in the carving figures with delineating expression and movement. The ancient textual sources also provide information about the life of women.

The Buddhist palm leaf manuscripts and illuminated Jain palm leaves with painted wooden covers represent scenes of Buddha's and Mahavira's life. Depiction of various deities like Manjusri, Prajnaparamita and Maya (Mother of Buddha) is remarkable. These palm leaf paintings are also valuable for social and cultural history of Bengal and Gujrat.

Miniature painting in early medieval times often suffered from stylization that limits the value of its evidence for the study of the life of people at large. Realism began to intrude in the work of the Malwa and central India schools, but it acquires true dominance in the splendid Mughal school. The Mughal Art is essentially court art, but it is still one in which ordinary women are brought into complete the picture. And, since every part of a Mughal painting, aims at perfection in rigorously accurate detail, we have more intimate views of material life than we can get anywhere else in pre-modern Indian art.

The famous Rajasthan and Hill schools are limited in themes and less exciting in detail, but much of what are artists depict is set in rural scenes, and these, too are therefore useful quarries for reconstructing the history of the people. Of late, there has been an emphasis on the social and cultural history – a study of the people at the bottom of the society, but their daily life and work yet remain to be brought under full focus. These people constituted the largest section of society but never occupied a central place in historical works. Thus their story largely remains untold.

Pictorial representation in the absence of textual evidence, nothing can be greater value than contemporary pictorial records: sculpture and painting. Through this medium we find, in illustrated form, a variety of evidence that supplement or explain textual descriptions. The importance is still greater, when as in the case of ancient and medieval India, textual evidence on common women is so limited. The pictorial evidence comes to us in the form of sculpture, cave paintings and miniatures, both in albums and manuscripts. These manuscript paintings depict rural women in their daily life, artisans and professionals at work with their tools and implements. Fortunately the Mughal period is the richest in this respect. The Mughal Emperors maintained atelier employing a large number of painters. Consequently we have fairly continuous record of their works. A good many of these have been lost; yet those surviving, provide us ample material for studying the culture of the time.

A brief survey of my work illustrates the life of women in general. There are quite a few miniatures depicting present life of women. A woman did most of the domestic work. She grounded corn, churned butter milk, fetched water from the well and spun cotton and also carried food and water for their men at work in the fields.

Mughal miniatures represent that dancers and musicians are part of court entertainment. The illustrations depicting women engaged in various professions like building construction work, hunting, painting, water carriers, washer women and attendant etc. These women attendant can be seen fanning and standing ready to serve their mistresses.

Paintings of the period also portray different type of entertainments. Picnics by ladies were occasions when they sought and found pleasure. Women of royalty also enjoyed drinking party with their man folk. Music and dancing was a necessary accompaniment of court life. It is well known that Mughal aristocratic women participated in various games. These games were not only indoor but also outdoor. Chess, *chaupar* playing cards and *chandalmandal* were the main indoor games and were the chief among the indoor games and were accessible to the rich and poor alike. The Mughal ladies also played wide and seek and *chaugan* or polo.

Women of Mughal India were also educated. Some royal ladies were interested in promoting the cause of education. Some aristocratic women like Bega Begum, Maham Anga, Qultuq Nigar Khanum, Aisan Daulat and Gurukh Begum etc. were educated and cultured ladies.

The women of harem celebrated festivals with great pomp and show. These women arranged parties on various occasions i.e. birthday, marriage and picnic etc. In the observance of festivals and ceremonies the role of religious or semi-religious people's significant. Many Mughal paintings represent vividly various festivals observed by the men and women both. These are Holi, Diwali, Dashehra, Rakshabandhan, Shab-e-barat and Id, etc. Holi and Diwali are the ancient Hindu festival, all these were adopted by the Mughal emperor. There is unmistakable pictorial evidence of an animated participation of the Muslim ladies as well as Hindu ladies in the celebration of these festivals.

Sati system was considered by the Hindus as an act of chastity. A widow had to burn herself with the dead body of her husband or had to lead a life of suffering and misery. In medieval India, the custom of *sati* gained an upper hand. Custom of sati and *jauhar* (of women on self-immolation the eve expected defeat in battle), which were so greatly in vogue in Rajput society, both in the region of Rajasthan and in Punjab hills.

The lives of the harem ladies were governed by the strict rules of purdah and seclusion. These women rarely went out of the palaces, but when they did, their faces, were well hidden behind veils. When they travelled, they were not seen by the out sides. But inside the harem quarters these women could move about freely.

Many of the royal ladies were educated, but their interest in learning did not stop with their receiving good education. Many of them composed beautiful verses and some of them have left behind works of great literary value. They spent much of their personal allowances in giving active support to the spread of education, establishing educational institutions, patronizing men of learning, maintaining their own libraries and collecting rare and valuable books.

An attempt has been made to study the social, cultural and economic life of women, which is depicted in sculptures, Ajanta cave paintings, ancient literature, eastern and western school of Art, Malwa School, Mughal, Rajsathani and Pahari miniature paintings. Painting was colourful art, which was employed in Mughal and pre Mughal times. Most of the paintings are in collection abroad, I have largely depended on their photo plate in institutes in India as well as on the reproductions in various books, journals and articles. I also used published photos for the study of sculptures and paintings.

I have however been fortunate to study some original painting – the *Anwar-i-Suhaili* illustrations at Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi and some folios (contained in Albums) at Raza library, Rampur. I have covered at galleries of National Museum, New Delhi, Sawai Man Singh II Museum Jaipur and art gallery of Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi.

As state earlier this work is primary based on sculptures, Ajanta cave paintings, eastern and western school of art, Malwa, Mughal, Rajasthani and Pahari paintings.

Literary sources have been used to clarify, or to shed light on some pictorial depictions.

This study as it describes the middle ages of Indian history, has mainly utilized Persian as well as English sources. The Persian sources, like any other source disregard women but one does find incidental references to women that are helpful for this study. In standard Persian histories, such as *Ain-i-Akbari* and *Akbarnama*, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, *HumayunNama*, *Maathir-ul-Umara*, *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, *Muntakhab-u-tTawarikh* etc. one does find references to women's social, cultural and economic life of such work.

The Sanskrit sources *Manu Smriti*, *Satapatha Brahmana*, *Vishnu*, *Dharma Sutras*, *Upanishads*, *Vedas*, etc. has been useful for women's life in Ancient India.

The travelogues, English as well as other languages, translations, though exaggerated many a times, account for a vast literature on India. To name a few, we have Thomas Roe, Bernier, Tavernier, Manucci and so on.

The other important source of information has been the sculptures of Bharhut, Mathura, Gupta, the cave paintings of Ajanta and the paintings of Mughal, Rajasthan, Pahari, Jaina, Pala and Malwa schools. All these visual and literary sources capture glimpses of social, cultural and economic life of women in history.

CHAPTER-1

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

(a) Context of Women in Classical Indian Sculpture

In ancient Indian sculpture developed and flourished long before the time of which we have archaeological records. The justification for the present effort which reproduces selected examples of Indian sculpture is the importance that the art of carving, modeling and casting has held in Indian civilization for more than 400 years. India provides today the best examples of a cultural continuity that has survived a long and diversified history, in which changes have occurred, old images of life have been altered and new elements and influences have been absorbed, enriching and variegating the cultural stands, without, however, breaking them.

Throughout the centuries sculpture in India has been a dominant expression of the people. The basic continuity of life of the majority of the population still living in villages, still mainly agriculturists, to great extent following ancient patterns of culture, including devotion to images representing the maintained pre-eminence.

Throughout history sculpture has played an important role in Indian society, serving religion, but also secular requirements such as the ornamentation of items of luxury as well as objects of daily use. These latter examples are rare, for articles used casually tend to become damaged, to wear out and then to be discarded. However, a sufficient number survives to illustrate the decorative inventiveness and skill of hand of the artists who fashioned them. The earliest sculptures came from the Indus valley. The human and animal figures excavated in that region show a high degree of finish and excellence and disclose an advance stage of development of the art in the third millennium B.C. these exhibit the skill of the sculpture in carving the figures in stone with exact anatomical details, delineating expression and movement with vigor and effect.[1]

The abundant collection of statuettes in stone, bronze and terracotta, found in the buried cities of Mohanjo Daro in Sindh and Harappa in the Punjab, dates back almost certainly to the third millennium B.C., but this Indo-Sumerian art does not seem to

1. Mathur, N.L., *Sculpture in India*, New Delhi, 1972, p. 19.

have any links with that of the later period of the so called Vedic time. The earliest specifically Indian sculptures in existence belong to 3rd century B.C., though there are references to various artistic crafts in literature before this time.[2]

As in the Harappan sculpture, the remarkable maturity of the work, which appears suddenly and without any hint of artistic context, is astonishing, quite the opposite of what one would expect at an early stage of development. A previous tradition of sculpture in perishable materials such as wood or clay has been proposed in explanation for this unusual circumstance; foreign influence has also been posited, and some connection with work at Persepolis in Iran is evident. Nevertheless, it is clear that whatever was borrowed was quickly transformed by the infusion of a plastic style characteristic of Indian sculpture. In particular, the voluminous rendering of the Didarganj Yakshi are far removed from anything produced earlier in Iran.[3]

The next period of Indian art, which extends roughly over the first two centuries B.C., is the best represented by a section of the railing surrounding the famous stupa of Bharhut. Not more than a hundred years separate this work from that of the preceding period, but the differences is starling. Rather than moving to an even more accomplished realization of volume, which may have seemed hardly possible, the sculptures took the opposite direction, producing highly abstract forms that stressed both flat and cubic shapes. The outlines are sharp and angular, the surface hard, and the ornament prices and detailed. The loosely joined parts of the body give the figures a puppet like character. Instead of being established on the ground, the somewhat weightless figures seem to float above it. These un-naturalistic features, together with the emotionless, masklike faces, result in a certain unearthly, hieratic beauty unique to this style.[4]

The sculpture of a woman in Bharhut depicts a woman in bed chamber. This scene is correlated with the Jataka story. This scene is showing the scene before the birth of Gautama his mother Maya Devi saw a dream in which a divine elephant descended from the *Tushita* heaven and entered her womb. The scene is carved on the medallion of the rail post. The queen sleeps on a couch with her right hand. A lamp with high stand burns towards her feet. Two attendants seated on cushion seem half asleep while

2 . Kar, Chintamani, *Classical Indian Sculpture 300 B.C. to A.D. 500*, London, 1950, p. 2.
3 . Chandra, Pramod, *The Sculpture of India 3000 B.C.-1300 A.D.*, Washington, 1985, p. 24.
4 . Chandra, Pramod, Ibid, p. 24.



Plate-1 Maya's Dream, Bharhut Sculpture

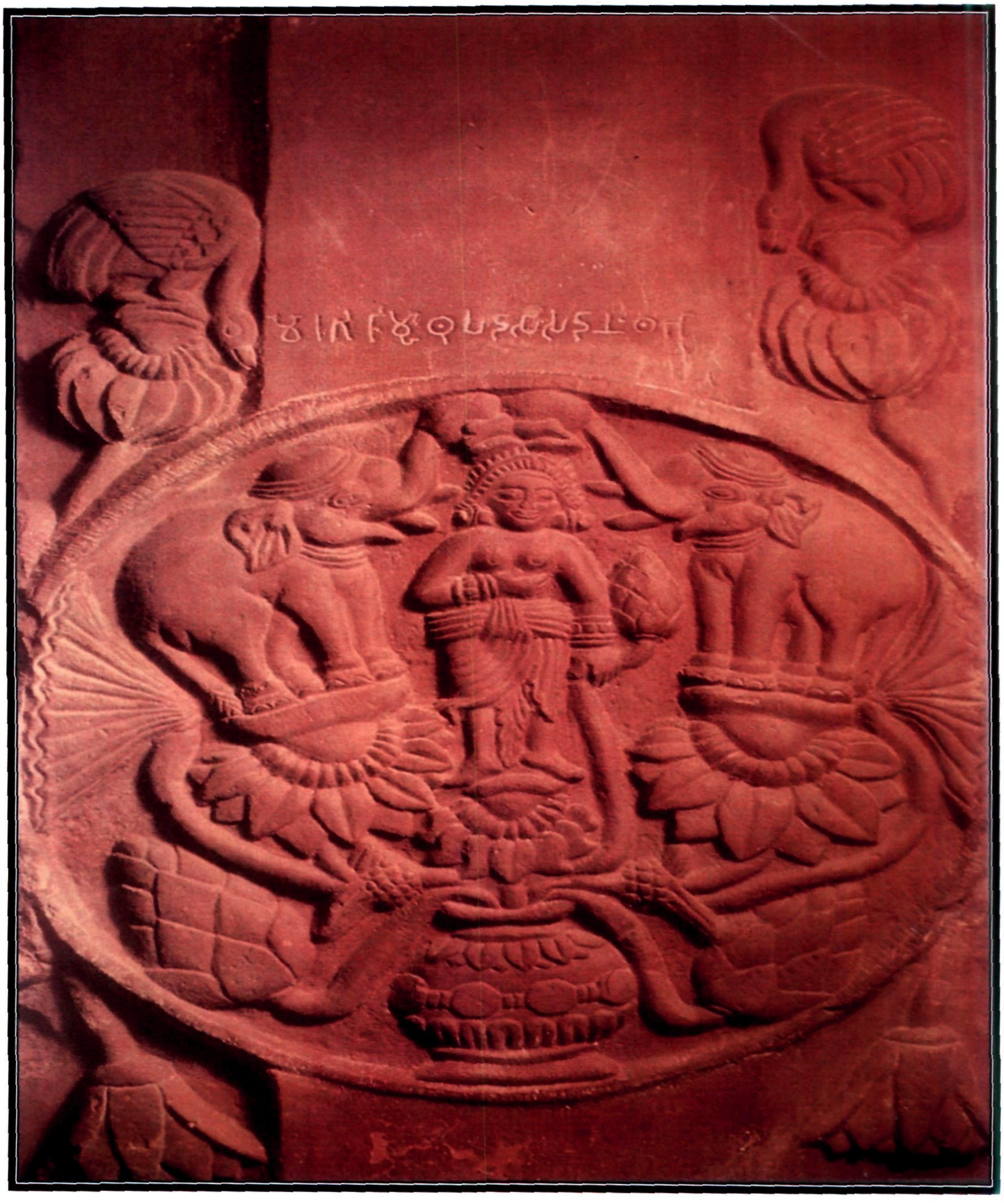


Plate- 2 Gaja Laxmi, Bharhut Sculpture

the third one has her hands folded in adoration. The divine elephant approaches her from above.[5]

The portions of the railing and the single gate preserved form the Bharhut stupa are lavishly carved. Figures and subjects represented are frequently labeled so that they provide helpful identification of scenes from the life of the Buddha and from the Jataka tales.

The Yakshi is carved on a post of the railing with red sand stone its height is 250 cm and is represented as grasping a branch of a tree above her head with one leaf around its trunk, thus emphasizing her role as a tree deity. She stands in a dance pose on an elephant. The sculptors understanding and skill are evident in the rendering of the form of the animal. The Yakshi wears a profusion of jewelry and a diaphanous pleated lower garment, held in place by a beaded belt and a knotted sash. She is the ideal of the Indian female form with large rounded breasts, a narrow waist and ample hips. The image has a certain archaic awkwardness of pose of great appeal and decorative effect.[6]

This beautiful figure of Gaja Lakshmi is carved in a medallion on both sides of rid post. It shows a full vase with overflowing stalked lotus buds and flowers. On the central flower stands Lakshmi holding a stalked lotus with her left hand and touching the left breast with the right hand. She is flanked by two elephants that stand on the full blown lotuses and anoint the deity with the vases held in their upraised trunks. From the lower outer ends of the medallion suspend buds while upper part on two corners shows swans perched on the full blown lotuses.[7]

The sculptures of the Bharhut took the opposite direction, producing highly abstract forms that stressed both flat and cubic shapes. The outlines are sharp and angular, the surface hard and the ornament precise detailed. The loosely joined parts of the body give the figures a puppet like character. These non-naturalistic features, together with

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5. Sharma, R.C., *Bharhut Sculpture*, New Delhi, 1994, p. 22.
6. Indian Museum, Calcutta Red Sandstone, height 250 cm; Morley, Grace, *Indian Sculpture*, Varanasi, 1985, p. 30, pl. 4.
7. Sharma, R.C., op. cit., p. 28.

the emotionless, mask like faces, result in a certain unearthly, hieratic beauty unique to this style.[8]

The elaborately sculptured gates of the Great stupa of Sanchi are considered to date form the late first century B.C. and early first century A.D. There are four facing each of the cardinal directions. They are thought to have been carved and installed over a considerable period, possibly about fifty years. The Sanchi gates are lavishly carved. A Yakshi (tree spirit) of the conventional female form, of large rounded breasts, slender waist and ample hips, wearing a transparent skirt, jewelry on ears, wrists and ankles, takes a graceful pose, suggesting the dance, as the bracket reproduced here.[9]

In the great stupa at Sanchi, Yakshis beneath trees that serve as brackets supporting the lowermost architrave. The image here, said to be from the west gateway, is a particularly fine, it damaged, example of these Yakshi sculptures. The deep fissure at the waist has been patched with plaster. Though the figure appears to lack a lower garment, the folded cloth brought up and tucked in at the back proves otherwise. The jewelry consists of a girdle of several strands with two long strings that cross between the breasts (where they are clasped by a rosette) as well as at the back. The hair is arranged in two flat braids joined to each other at the top and completely covering the back, above which are swinging jeweled garlands, a part of the now missing coif. This gently swelling body is filled with life is conveyed the sensuous, resilient rendering of the surface of its flesh, and this mastery of the depiction of volume and texture indicates the great change that occurred in Indian sculpture during the approximately one hundred years that separate Bharhut railing from the Sanchi gates. The form moves again towards the kind of naturalism seen in the Maurya period, though the surfaces here are markedly softer. A sense of weight again pervades the figure as it swings to the side, the carving contours of the thigh and the arched girdle providing smooth and easy counter-rhythms that flow in harmony with body's shapes. The figure thus stands endowed with a lithe and radiantly sensuous beauty unparalleled in Indian art. In the bracket figures of Sanchi, the female form comes fully into its own as an artistic subject.[10] The Sanchi stupa is a joyous exploitation of mass an volume.

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8. Indian Museum, Calcutta, Section of a railing with Yakshi from Bharhut; Chandra, Pramod, *The Sculpture of India 3000 B.C. – 1300 A.D.*, Washington, 1985, Fig. 8, p. 24.
9. Morley, Grace, op. cit., p.34; Northgate, Sanchi, administered by the Archaeological Survey of India.
10. Chandra, Pramod, op. cit., pp. 52-53; Archaeological Museum, Sanchi.



Plate- 3 Bust of a Goddess, Sarnath, c. 7th Century, Indian Museum Calcutta



Plate- 4 Head of a Goddess, Banaras, c. 7th Century, Bharat Kala Bhawan Banaras



Plate- 5 Bodhisattva, Sarnath, c. 7th Century, National Museum New Delhi

The forms are much fuller and soft, melting surface endow the figures with an earthiness quite different from the hieratic aloofness of Bharhut. Ornaments and jewelry are greatly reduced.

The principal episodes of the Buddha's life, sculptured again and again on slab for stupas, or for their railings, have seldom been so neatly and economically summarized pictorially as in the panel of Sarnath stupa. This panel is to be read from the lower left. Queen Maya Devi, Siddhartha's mother, is shown lying down. The small elephant that she dreamt had entered her body hovers above her. At the right, she stands clasping a branch with her left hand, and the child issuing from her slightly protruding right hip is received by Indra. In the centre, the child, in larger size, making the gesture of reassurance, stands on a long-stemmed lotus.[11]

The bust of a female figure from Sarnath[12] with drooping shoulders and globular breasts appears to have been a part of a slender body. The oval and slightly pointed at the lower end face, with almost meditative eyes is expressive of serenity and inner calm. The damaged nose, in all probability, was also gently pointed. The lips, small and closed, express a quite restraint. The hair is pulled back and tied in a large elegant bun and the locks are horizontally arranged one above the other. The pearl diadem is set in front of the head and the chignon is bound by a circular fillet. A chain ornament borders the headdress. She wears two necklaces, one of which falls between the breasts that are fully developed and treated in a typical Gupta plastic mode.

The female head from Banaras[13] is almost similar in style. From its idealized and graceful face it may have belonged to a deity. Her face is beaming with a sweet smile. She is gazing down; the eye brows are ridged unlike the preceding example. The nose seems originally to have been sharp. The lips are thick and full, the chin is pointed. The hair treatment is similar to that of the Sarnath female bust.

In an image of Bodhisattva from Sarnath[14] the deity is shown standing in *abhanga* pose against a plain stela. Stela is a single piece and carried up to the top where it serves as a frame to entire composition. The upper part of the stela is damaged, so

11 . Morley, Grace, op. cit., p. 60.
12 . Indian Museum Cat. No. 9508/A 24229.
13 . Nagar, N.M., *Select Sculptures in the U.P. Museum*, Lucknow, 1953, Pl. 20, Bharat Kala Bhavan Cat. No. 194.
14 . Coomaraswamy, A.K., *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, Dower (ed.) New York, 1965, Fig. 176.

also the feet and the pedestal. The physiognomic features of the Bodhisattva are elegant and graceful. The torso is broad in the upper section and gradually attenuated in the lower. The arms and limbs are lithe and pliant. The ovular face is full. The eyebrows are deeply cut and the eyes are half closed. The nose seems to be pointed and the sensitive lips are well formed and firm. The facial treatment maintains the Gupta classical plastic characteristics. The neck has distinct parallel curves, a legacy of the Gupta style. The ornaments are simple and scare. The long hair is suggested by separate vertical incised lines.[15]

A fragmentary bust of Bodhisattva from Sarnath[16] showing the rounded contour with broad shoulders, fuller arms and a gracefully attenuated waist is reminiscent of the Gupta plastic norms. The face is rounded and full with broad forehead. The clearly marked eye-brows and eye-lids have gained separate volumes. The nose though damaged appears to have been sharp and pointed, and the lips are tightly closed and firm. His ornaments are simple but prominently shown especially the headdress, earrings, necklace and armlets. The female *cauri* bearer on his right is remarkable for its tender appearance.

A fine image of a woman representing the Buddhist divinity Tara, the feminine counterpart of a Bodhisattva, was discovered to the south of the main shrine at Sarnath.[17] The weight of body is thrown gently on the right leg, so that it is imbued with the same rhythm as the other fine examples from the Sarnath School. The lower garment is hardly visible, and an equally sheer upon cloth, the hem of which is clearly visible over the right breast and left thigh, is drawn across the body and left arm, failing at the side in pleated folds. The jewelry is rich, yet delicate, and consists of a multi stranded girdle, festooned armlets, and a series of three necklaces. One of these is made up of graded beads with an oblong central spacer, the second of coiled pearl strands, and the third, of strings of pearls that pass between the breasts and cross over the waist. Large circular earrings adorn the ears. Although the face is damaged, the gentle meditative expression remains. The elaborate coiffure consists of several rows of ringlets and curls arranged over the forehead and to the side of the head, all topped by a large bun. A fillet decorated with a tall central plaque, the beaded bands of which

15. The Sarnath Bodhisattva is preserved in the National Museum, New Delhi.
16. Saraswat, S.K., *Survey of Indian Sculpture,* Calcutta, *1957*, Fig. 64.
17. Sarnat Museum Cat. No. 35.



Plate- 6 Bodhisattva, Sarnath, c. 9th Century, Sarnath Museum



Plate- 7 Tara Sarnath, c. 9th Century, Sarnath Museum

are concealed by the first row of curls, is worn across the forehead. A swath of folded hair rests on the right shoulder, while a few loose locks stray over the left. The tall halo, which backs the entire body, has a scalloped edge with a pearled margin. In the left hand the figure holds a ripe pomegranate, which has burst open to reveal a row of seeds.[18]

The modeling of the legs and torso is tender, reticent, and of the utmost delicacy. The shimmering, soft quality of the cloth, which is practically invisible, is skillfully suggested by its trembling outline. The same keen observation is seen in the rendering of the body surfaces, the puffy swath of hair resting on the right shoulder, the freely tumbling ringlets over the forehead, and in the shape and texture of the pomegranate.[19]

The Amravati sculptures are very vigorous, full of movement, vibrating with life and energy and charming in every detail. The figures are characterized by slim and blithe features and are carved in the most difficult poses and curves. In every case there is a refinement over the rather coarse and sensual concept of beauty developed by the sculpture in the earlier period. Men and women are presented in a graceful form.[20] Figures and settings are arranged in a number of planes and these are full of movement and excitement.

In the *Tusita* heaven above the stupa, the Buddha is seated on a throne receiving worship. The figures of *Nagaraja* and his wife who are worshipping are very expressive and are well drawn with anatomical details. The reliefs have numerous carvings of scenes of music and dance which exhibit a well developed sense of movement and composition. Figures of women are lovely, and their gait is rhythmic. The marbles of Amravati offer "delightful studies of animal life, combined with extremely beautiful conventional ornament. The most varied and difficult movements of the human figures are drawn and modeled with great freedom and skill.[21]

The sculpture of an unidentified scene was discovered at Bhitari. In the centre is a man whose head and body are covered by a thick cloth. He offers a child to the outstretched hands of a woman. She is accompanied by a female attendant, who raises

18 . Sarnath Museum Cat. No. 28.
19 . Chandra, Pramod, op. cit., p. 88.
20 . Coomaraswamy, A.K., op. cit., p. 71.
21 . Havell, E.B., *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, London, 1908, p. 107.

a finger in a gesture of astonishment. Behind the man is a fierce grimacing turf of astonishment. Behind the man is a fierce, grimacing figure holding a club. Two dwarfs occupy the lower section of the panel. One bends to the side and turns his back to glance in the direction of the child; the female dwarf in the centre holds what looks like a tray.[22]

The image of Sri Lakshmi has a globular pot at the base from which issues a column of lotus flowers, foliage, and buds, and a pair of peacocks perched on a leaf in the center at the rear. In front, with each foot resting on a rounded flower is the goddess of fertility and wealth. Her association with this lotus is stressed, for she is not only supported by this flower, but her whole body adheres to the plant and thought of as emerging from it. Depicted as a mature, womanly figure of gentle men, she rests one hand on her breast, the source of milk and human sustenance, while placing the other holding a twig of leaves, on the girdle just below the navel. The face is gently lowered, very much in the attitude of a mother nursing her child.[23] Though her face has been damaged, the beneficent smile is unmistakable. Her hair is elaborately dressed; she wears ear rings, a flat necklace close to her throat and a long string of large beads falling between her breasts. Her arm bands are elaborately carved and multiple bracelets adorn her forearms. A skirt of transparent material, gathered into a series of pleats in the front centre descends from a scarf and a broad beaded belt, with tassels, to the ankles which are encircled by heavy ornaments. Both the iconography and style of the image derived from the Yakshi figures of Sanchi. The maternal idea of female beauty is endowed here with the same heavy, languorous grace, but is carved in a more complex manner. The function of this image is not known. The top of the pillar, leveled off at a later time, may have once supported a bowl or similar object, a feature preserved in some other images of this type.[24]

The images of Yakshis in both sides, was once a supporting bracket, similar to the type found at Sanchi. The figures both have one hand raised above the head holding the branch of an *Asoka* tree, the other hand in all probability once rested on the hip. The image on the better preserved side has a gorgeous coiffure, the braided hair coiled in ten rolls that fan out behind the head in an elegant swirl. The forehead ornament is

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22 . Chandra Pramod, op. cit., p. 90, Cat. No. 33
23 . National Museum New Delhi Collection; Chandra, Pramod, op. cit., p. 54.
24 . Morley Grace, op. cit., p. 54, Pl. 16.

a crescent moon held in place by beaded strings. The background foliage is rendered with remarkable skill, each trembling leaf endowed with weight, volume, and brisk, surging movement. Though the round face ("moon shaped") and a breast are damaged, and the portion below the waist is missing the image is in much better condition than its counterpart on the reverse.[25]

At Bhutesar in Mathura has representations of Yakshis, but none of them is associated with a tree, as is traditional. Rather, they are shown simply participating in the pleasures of life, dressing and adorning themselves or playing with pet birds. Carved above, in a register demarcated by a railing motif, are amorous or carousing couples.

In the example displayed here, a woman, her head tilting drunkenly to the side, is hanging onto her lover, who clings to his cup of wine. The Yakshi stands in an elegant and carefree posture, putting a garland of coiled strings of pearls around her neck. The body is animated by a lively rhythm, the face expressive of youthful happiness.[26]

The sculpture shows a young woman in profile, leaning against an *asoka* tree. Her pose refers to the ancient belief that a tree will not bloom unless struck by the foot of a woman. The woman holds a flower and looks at it, head lowered in thought. Her slender body is tenderly modeled the restrained and delicate contours reinforcing the pensive and wistful mood.[27]

Only the lower half of this sculpture has been preserved. The woman's brisk, twisting motion accentuates the folds of flesh at the waist and causes the long chain necklace and its pendant to swing over the right thigh. It has also caused the lower garment to slip away from the waist, although this could have happened in the woman's attempt to cast off the scorpion. The nervous flutter of folds along the edge of the skirt, where the garment has begun to peel away from the body, reinforces the sense of agitated movement. A scorpion is shown in the narrow band of cubic rocks carved in relief on the pedestal. Although the forms are full, a quick, gliding line characterizes the contours together with the soft, diffuse shadows shaping the limbs and the thin,

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25 . State Museum Lucknow J 598 collection; Chandra, Pramod, op. cit., pp. 54-55, Cat. 9 front and back.

26 . Indian Museum Calcutta Collection; Chandra Pramod, op. cit., p. 56.

27 . Government Museum, Mathura, 33.

sensitive lines outlining the garment, they create a work of art of singular individuality and accomplishment.[28]

This sculpture in red sandstone, of a female figure, with a bird on the left shoulder and holding a bird cage in the right hand, adorned the post of a railing of a small stupa. It has been reproduced frequently as an especially charming example of the type. It is one of a group, from a Mathura site, of which the Yakshis, either with both feet on a crouching figure as in this piece, or in a dance pose on a similar crouching figure, carry a variety of objects. Above each one is a compartment of the pillar, like a window or balcony, on which other smaller figures are depicted in different activities.

All the figures on the posts wear what appears to be a transparent lower garment, draped in various ways, below a decorated belt; they have anklets and bracelets and necklaces of different types and their hair is arranged in a variety of styles. Often on the back of such posts some Jataka story is sculptured, or there is the round form of the stylized lotus flower. Those unfamiliar with Indian sculpture are often puzzled to find such representations of female beauty associated with religious structures.[29] Mathura sculpture adds further refinements and complexities to the Sanchi style. The female figures, for example are completely unified and coordinated entities, so that the movements initiated in one limb ripples throughout the rest of the body. The rhythms animating the figures become progressively more subtle and varied; at times they are so full of life that they convey an impression of playful dance, a sense heightened by the increasing tension that enlivens the surface. Emotions are no longer confined to the face alone, but are expressed by the attitude of the entire body, a feature most evident in the figure of a woman holding a flower. All these changes result in a greatly humanized style in which the distinction between the secular and the spiritual, never very clear in Indian art further obscured.[30]

The Gupta artist laid stress on naturalism. In expressing the proportions of the body, he took its measurements not from the geometrical criteria of Greeks, but from the living curves found in nature.[31] The indigenous art of image making of men and deities, reached its highest watermark. No art in the world can be compared with the

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28. Indian Museum, Calcutta Collection 25021.
29. Indian Museum Calcutta Collection.
30. Chandra Pramod, op. cit., pp. 27-28.
31. Mathur, N.L., op. cit., p. 18.

Gupta art in the revelation of the majesty and sublimity, charm and tenderness of the human figure. The Gupta type is characterized by its refinement, a clear delineation of the feature, curly hair, greater variety of *mudras*, elaborately decorated nimbus, the covering of one or both shoulders and extremely diaphanous robe clearly revealing the figure and by a lotus or lion pedestal usually with figures of donor.[32] Gupta sculpture reflects the high accomplishment and depth of human insight of the artist.

The human figure become the main subject matter for the artists in the Gupta period and the figures were sculptured in stone and other materials as far as practicable in their ideal forms. Thus for working out the ideal shapes and for different components in the body formations, the artists studied intently the possible movements and simile in nature and incorporated them accordingly.

The oval shape of a hen's egg was imbibed for the shape of a face (*Kukkutandaval*). They are of a bow supplied the ideal shape of brows (*capakaram*); for the shape of a brow, the movement of a delicate *nim* leaf (margosa) was also followed in certain images. The eyes were worked out in various shapes for indicating different expressions such as like a bow (*capakaram*), as a lotus petal or a bud (*padmpatra*), like the eyes of a deer (*mrgakriti*), like the belly of a fish (*matsyodaram*) or just as the petal of utpala (blue lotus) flower. The spiral movement of a conch shell was adopted for the formation of a neck (*kamburgiva*), the shape of a chin followed the look of a mango seed *(amra-vijam)*, the nose resembled the beak of a parrot (*sukanasa*), the pendant of an arm conformed to the shape of an elephant's trunk (*gajatundakriti*), the forearm followed the formation of a young plantain tree (*bula kaddali kandam*), a woman's waist the middle part of a kettle drum (*damaru madhyam*) was preferred. For the shape of knee-cap the outer contour of a crab was followed (*karkatakriti*) while for the shape of calf, the form of a fish was taken as an ideal (*matsyakriti*) and for showing the two feet projecting in front jointly and, preferably while showing a figure standing in *sama pada sthanaka* pose, the classical artist imitated a full-blown lotus with petals (*carana-kamal*).[33]

The Mathura sculptures worked in red sandstone with either white or buff spots or striations. It is interesting to note that the Sarnath sculptures, which were largely

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32 . Coomaraswamy, A.K., op. cit., p. 174.

33 . Saraswat, S.K., *A Survey of Indian Sculpture*, Calcutta, 1957, pp. 125-126.

influenced by the Mathura school, even went so far as to cover their cream sandstone pieces subsequently with red pigments so that they appeared as red Mathura sandstone.[34] Sarnath sculptures worked with buff coloured chunar sandstone. The material, as such, helped the sculptures to bring in a smooth and shining texture less surface in the figures. Sculptures made with this material appeared soft and graceful with gliding lines and rhythmic plastic surface.[35]

(b) Women in Ajanta Cave Paintings

The paintings of Ajanta occupy a very significantly place in Indian Art History. These caves are richly decorated with paintings. These are sufficient to give us a fairly good idea of the achievement of the ancient Indian artist. The paintings mostly depict the stories of the Buddha's past lives as described in the *Jatakas* and the *Avadanas*. In executing them in paint the artists very naturally depicted the contemporary life. The material culture that is depicted in the paintings is extremely helpful in building up a picture of life in Ancient India in general and in the Deccan in particular.

At Ajanta a rough under plaster was used on the rock, made of clay, cow dung, chopped husks and little stones, and a thin coat of shell-lime put on top. The outlines were pounced, then firmly drawn, colour filled in, and the final dark and high lights added on top, the colours being bound not only by lime crystals, as in Italy, but also by tempera made of boiled tamarisk seeds or sap of local shrubs. Some of the walls at Ajanta were waxed under Italian supervision, but the glorious ceiling of Caves 1 and 2 remain as matt and brilliant as when first painted.[36]

Thousands of guidelines on how to paint must have been developed for the use of the members of guilds of painters. The treatise provides exhaustive details of methods used in the rendering of different kind of people, animals and landscapes; three different kind of people, animals and landscapes; three different ways of carrying out shading; instructions on way of using colours and even on how to prepare colours. From these descriptions we learn that the artist would have spent many days and sometimes even weeks just in preparing the paints which were to be used in the caves.

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34 . Biswas, T.K. and Jha, Bhogendra, *Gupta Sculptures*, New Delhi, 1985, p. 31.

35 . Ibid. p. 32.

36 Mary, Queen, "*Exhibition of Ajanta Cava Paintings (Art.)*", Indian Art, Vol. 19, p. 55, no.2, 1945.

One may well imagine that, after such pains taken by each artist, in the preparation of his materials, putting the colours on the walls would have been regarded by him as an action of devotion.[37]

In the period of two or three hundred years which preceded, the earliest stone monasteries, much must have happened in the field of colouring and drawing to necessitate changes also in the technique of surface preparation. In the cave temples the rough surface of the naked stone walls was first covered with a layer of potter's clay taken from the slimy beds of pools and mixed with molasses, bdellium and rice husks, which perhaps animal glue as a binding medium. On this a thin layer of lime plaster was applied as priming. A buffalo skin was boiled in water until it became soft. Sticks were then made of the paste and dried in the sunshine. It is started that if colour is mixed with this hard plaster, called *Vajralepa*, it makes it fast, and if white mud is mixed with it, it serves as a perfect medium for coating the walls. *Vajralepa* coating was usually done in three layers over a plaster which consisted of powdered brick, burnt conches and sand, mixed with a liquid preparation of molasses and drop of a decoction of *mudga (phaseolus munga).* To this quantity of mashed ripe bananas or tree raisins and the pulp of Bell fruit (anglemarmelos) was also added. After the mixture had dried it was again ground down and mixed with molasses and water until it became soft.[38]

The artists of Ajanta employed a simple palette consisting of five colours, as prescribed in the ancient treatise: white (Sweta), derived from lime, kaolin and gypsum; red (rakta) and yellow (Pita), obtained from ochre which was found in the nearby hills; black (Krishna) from soot, and green *(harit)*, extracted from glauconitic a mineral which was also to be fond locally. To these was added, in the second phase of the paintings at Ajanta, the blue of lapis lazuli, which was brought from the north-western frontiers of India. These simple colours were blended to produce the innumerable nuances and shades which are found in the paintings. In the words of the *Vishnudharmottara Purana*, 'It would be impossible to enumerate the mixed colours

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37 Behl, K.B., *The Ajanta Caves*, Singapore, 1948, p. 34.

38 Singh, Madanjeet, *The Cave Paintings of Ajanta*, Great Britain, 1965, p.61.

in this world the mixture of two or three (primary colours) and through inventions of various states or conditions (i.e. shades or tones)[39]

The wall surface was washed down with water until it was thoroughly clean and the plaster was applied with a spoon. This was the twofold process by which the wall was prepared for painting. A preliminary sketch in hematite was drawn on the surface while it was still slightly wet, followed by an under painting in grey or white monochrome, like the medieval Italian practice of *terra verde*. The recent revelation of the depth to which the pigments are absorbed in the nearly two centimeter thick plaster has confirmed that the application of mineral colours on a semi wet surface, instead of a completely dry plaster, was a technique already known to Ajanta painters. On this surface an outline in cinnabar red was filled in with various colours, proceeding from under painting as the base to the appropriate colours of the subject. Finally, when dry of semi fresco was finished off, a dark outline for final definition and a burnishing process to give luster to the surface. Even in the earliest caves the "Eight limbs" of the *Samaranganasutradhara* were apparently known. These were: *Vartika* (the rayon), *bhumibandhana* (preparation of the surface), *reka-karma* ¼1/4 outline work), *laksana (*the characteristic lineaments of types*), Varna-karma (*colouring*) Vartana-Karma* (plastic modeling or relief by shading), *lekha-Karma* (correction) and *dvika-Karma* (final outline). This art was not limited by the boundaries of any one faith or religion.[40]

No painter worked singly in any one cave; in practice many worked together or at different times. This is seen in the different styles of individual artists within each cave. There are no true shadows in the paintings at Ajanta, but the most subtle nuances of shading, with almost imperceptible deepening and lightening of the same colour, persuade the eye of the roundedness of forms. Eyelids, the nose, lips and the chin are also skillfully highlighted. The brush-strokes are long and bold, producing a grace and sweep which give Ajanta a unique place in art. The artist displays a command of the technique of foreshortening, which is also mentioned in the *Vishnudharmottara,* and is fully familiar with the principles of perspective.[41]

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39 Behl, K.B., op. cit., p. 35.
40 Singh Madanjeet, op. cit., p. 64.
41 Behl, K.B., op. cit., p. 37.

Above all, Ajanta's creative genius lies in the portrayal of women. The lovely ladies of the courts with their handmaids, the dancers and the musicians, the devotees, the common women and even the beggar girls are all drawn with brilliant zest and extraordinary knowledge. The conventions and orthodox attitudes which the painters adopted for their immortal, transcendental archetypes were deliberately set aside when they outlined the attractive mortals. The decorative, ornamental value of these lovely women was, as it were, too precious an asset to be subordinated or diminished by the pictorial formulae for drawing the Buddhas and Bodhisatvas. Whether they are painted in repose, talking to their lovers, instructing their handmaids, admiring themselves in mirrors, carrying offerings, lifting the loads off their slaves heads, or simply standing, sitting and gossiping, they are always painted with a sort of wonder akin to awe. Each time a woman is sketched, a feeling of new experience and excitement appears through the artist's veins as he struggled to reproduce the soft roundness of her breasts, the curves of her hips, the turn of her head, the contortions of her body, the gestures of her hands, or the stunting glance of her eyes. Like fresh blossoms the women are invariably refreshing and fragrant. Whether they decorate the palaces as they sit in groups like garlands, crowd together in the street scenes, embellish the windows by their graceful presence lightly fly through the air in the form of nymphs or are strewn like single flowers in the parlors of houses, they radiate that sheer joy and exuberance inherent in copying the female figure. Even when in the shape of ogresses they lure the sailors to their doom, the feminine aspect predominates, they never lose their dignity and nowhere are they besmirched or belittled. Just as the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are the central theme in painting the sacred images, in the orbit of secular subjects the women are the focal point.[42]

The flower strewn background with hills and swaying creepers and banana trees, the gentle rhythmical inclination of the women votaries with their graceful figures and gestures, the balanced distribution of the volumes over a large area, all contribute to the lyrical feeling of unsurpassed harmony and tranquility. The figures of the women are drawn in a pose half way between strict profile and complete frontage the faces are similarly sketched, and in one or two cases the woman's head is elegantly turned towards her companion. There is a remarkable ease in the drawing of arms and hands, the arms bend at the elbows, mostly at right angles, or hang softly caressing the

42 Singh, Madanjeet, op. cit., p.103.

slightly curved hips. The exquisite gently bending attitudes of the votaries as they walk along in the open air with uncovered breasts wearing simple attire and very few ornaments are also essentially similar in the two processions.[43]

Among men the women of Ajanta is always the queen, herself at her best, helped by the lines. The lines search for volumes to embrace, caress her contours, and underline her grace. Appearing again and again, whether walking or standing, sitting or reclining, her is the image of beauty in repose – arrested activity, floating lines at ease knitting her into the texture of nature in growth.[44]

A *Dark Princess* in Cave no. 1, of the 6th century, shows the crisis of the painter's conscience. The budding beauty of the girl, with a rather melancholy bent head, is being contemplated by a monk as temptation he must resist.[45] The painter, therefore, infuses into her lovely, lush, purple brown contours, all the ripeness of bursting fruit, with certain despondency in the full lower lip, as though her beauty is the harbinger of doom. The contrast of the fixed poses between the princess and the other figures around is static. The dreamy eyes seem to be manipulated like a cliché. The heavy breasted, desirable girl, with the mystic gaze, is adorned with so much jewelry that she clearly represents a stylized lady of the era of gold. If we contrast her with the wanton lady in Cave No. 17 of the *Viswantara Jataka, the Dark Princess* seems like a baroque figure. The brushwork is now a stylization of the sensuous art of Caves No. 9, 10, 16 and 17 into an art for the sake of sensuousness.

In Cave No. 1 and 2 therefore, decorative elements, bordering on the lovely – lovely, are being to dominate. The colours are still vivacious. The poses repeat the previous formulas. There is even the illusion of relief through shading as per usual. But the elaborate toilet of the girl, with the careful array of the tiara on the dark hair, the abstract ringlets and the kiss curls, become a study in elegance, where the inner question of the vanity of life is not echoed.[46]

Her features are very refined and the delineation of the eyes, with hazel brown irises, is extremely realistic. Although the painting has suffered considerable damage, it is

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43 Singh, Madanjeet, Ibid. p. 106.

44 Ghosh, A., *Ajanta Murals*, p. 10 Calcutta, 1967.

45 Aanad, Mulk Raj, *Ajanta* p. 52, pl.28 Bombay, 1971.

46 Anand, Mulk Raj, ibid.



Plate- 8 Dark Princess, Cave no. 1, Ajanta

still regarded as one of the finest work of Indian artistic genius and counts among the most outstanding portraits of feminine beauty made in any part of the world.[47]

The first scene in Cave 1 unfortunately no more than a few fragments on the female attendant bearing a fan, and a number of male figures. As this picture is followed by the scene of the birth, this first scene can only be an event that took place before the birth of the Bodhisatva. On the basis of iconographic parallels from the earliest period, there are only two events, also depicted in reliefs, that it could be either the sojourn of the Bodhisatva in the *Tusita* heaven or the conception, i.e. the entry of the Bodhisatva into the womb of Queen Maya in the form of a white elephant. The fact that in our picture, in attrition to the female attendant with the fan, at least three male figures can be recognized makes it highly unlikely that the conception is depicted here. The literary sources agree that the conception took place during the night.[48]

The next picture of the right extends from an arched doorway on the left to a *torana* (gateway) on the right in the Cave X. The trees which fill the space between this *torana* and the middle of the picture indicate that the scene takes place in a park. To the left of the middle of the picture, four male figures are to be seen who are pointing at the event in the centre of the picture; above them there are three attendants holding fans. A drum of the right of the first fan bearer indicates that the event in the centre is accompanied by heavenly music. Beneath this drum, peacock feathers similar to those often found on female headdress can be discerned, and they can also be seen on one of the women in the Bodhi scene.[49] Unfortunately, a part from loincloth and the indistinct outline of a hand, nothing more has survived of the woman who is wearing this headdress. To the right and slightly below this woman, almost exactly in the centre of the scene, a branch of a tree, while she is looking to the right with head slightly inclined. There can be a doubt that the woman we have before us is the mother of the Bodhisatva, and that our painting is, therefore, the earliest existing portrayal of the birth of the Bodhisatva in the Lumbini grove. As a comparable representation has survived neither in Sanchi nor in Bharhut, we are confronted here with the question of how our painting relates to the literary sources, and to the portrayals of the birth of the Budha developed in the art of other religious. It is feature

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47 Behl, K.B., op. cit,. pp. 66-67.

48 Windisch, E, Budhas Geburt, Leipzig, 1908; pp.153-173; Luders, H, *Bharhut and die Buddhistische literature*, Leipzing, 1941, pp. 45-52,.

49 Schingloff, Dieter, *Studies in the Ajanta Paintings*, Delhi, 1987, p. 4, fig. 1 to 5.

of the birth of the Buddha developed in the art of other regions. It is feature of the 'Southern' literary[50] and the pictorial[51] tradition that there are four deities present at the birth, whereas according to the 'northern' literary tradition and corresponding pictorial representation,[52] it is the god Indra who is in attendance, sometimes accompanied by Brahma and other deities. The four deities in the southern tradition, like Indra in the northern tradition, hold a cloth in which they ceremonially receive the new-born Bodhisatva. In our painting, however the four gods are pointing with their four fingers at the event of the birth, while the cloth seems to be hovering in the air between the female attendant and the first of the gods.[53] As the various sources are unanimous that the Bodhisatva emerged from his mother's right side, in the reliefs – but unlike in our painting the female attendant is usually depicted on her left. In our painting the Bodhisatva's mother is holding the branch with her left hand.

Cave I, depicts conversion of Nanda King. Nanda's wife Queen Janpada Kalyani (left has been depicted) informed that her husband, once the king, has come to the palace door begging for alms. The queen is deeply disturbed by these unusual events and wonders how to win back the attention of her husband. Interestingly, this is the only panel at Ajanta in which the women are seen wearing the traditional Indian *bindi* (an auspicious circular symbol of marriage) on the forehead. An agitate palace attendant is portrayed in the story of king Nanda. One can well imagine the confusion and the rush of mixed emotions created within the palace by the appearance of the king in his new sate as a mendicant. A charming detail is a woman who is seated on the ground with her back to the viewer, also listening to the sermon. Her pose shows great observation and skill she is squatting on the ground with cross leg, learning on her left hand which is placed on the ground, while her right hand with the elbow resting on her knee supports her head in a very realistic manner. To her right is a dwarf, who brings an offering of flowers for the ascetic. The religious austerity of the scene is offset by the somewhat comic effect of his long trunk and wild expression.[54]

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50 Majjhimanikaya, 123, ed. Vol. III, pp. 122, 125-127.
51 Amravati (I). Madras, Government Museum, 221;
52 Indra and Brahma, *Lalitavistara*, Ch.7, ed. P. 83, 12
53 Nidana Katha, ed. pp. 52, 29.
54 Behl, K.B., op. cit., pp. 78, 81-82.

The prince and his consort and the wailing women are reproduced in colour for the first time. The story in Cave I is depicted in three episodes on the wall of the front aisle, between the main doorway and the window to the left of it.

The first episode shows Prince Sibi in a palace surrounded by ladies of the court when the pigeon alights in his lap to seek refuge. Towards the right there is a pavilion containing the detail the Prince and His Consort. The Prince, wearing a light crown and a string of pearls across his shoulder, seems to be in a dilemma, while his consort, of greenish complexion, looks at him with the story has not been established, but possibly they are yet another example of the *mithuna* figure which is so poplar at Ajanta. The second and main episode begins immediately to the right of this pavilion. In this scene the Raja is standing by the side of the scales and appears to be on the pigeon. The three lovely figures on the right hand side of the Raja, they are lamenting at the sight of Bodhisattva is ordeal. These figures, set against the green leaves of a *pipal* tree beyond which the vermillion horizon can be seen, produce a pleasing colour pattern. The conventional flattened perspective of restricted tonal colour scale has been produced by deeply demarcating plain surface of pure primary colour. This style appears to have had considerable influence on the hasty, sum nary technique of drawing and colouring in contemporary art.[55]

Cave I, shows Queen Shivali, who is perplexed by her husband's desire to leave the palace and part from her. The artist's minute attention to detail in these paintings is extraordinary. The gentle curve of the strings of pearls hanging beneath the queen's bosom depicts a lightly swinging movement with exquisite realism. The curl of hair upon her neck and shoulders emphasize her vulnerability at this moment when her husband has chosen to leave her. Three of the palace maids, painted behind the queen, respond with shock and sadness to the most unexpected news that the king intends to renounce his worldly life and leave their mistress the queen. Amazement is writ large upon the face of one maid and we see the sorrowful glances of the other two. The directness of the warm human touch in this moment of grief is clearly evident as they empathize with the queen's deep sense of impending loss. A most unusual and realistic moment captured by the vivid imagination of the painters of Ajanta: a maid is shown pressing the legs of the queen, but obviously she is distracted by the dancer

55 Singh Madanjeet, op.cit, p. 156.

behind her and, even as she touches the queen's legs she turns to look in that direction.[56]

Between the pavilion of the royal couple and the dancer are two other palace maids. One is in a pensive mood and the other leans upon her shoulder looking at her, as if questioning.

The composition of this scene in the painting in Cave II at Ajanta depicts in the night the Bodhisatva entered the womb of Queen Maya in the form of an elephant. The event takes place in an upper room of the royal palace with two doors leading into it. All that has survived are remnants of the lower end of the queen's bed and the figures of a number of female attendants seated at the foot of the bed. Who show by the gestures they are making their hands that they are observing and commenting on what is happening. In Cave II at Ajanta both the recounting of the dream and the interpreting of the dream are portrayed. Maya tells the king of her dream in a small palace room above the bed-chamber while the interpretation of the dream takes place in an open palace room above the birth scene. Here the king and queen, surrounded by maidservants, are shown sitting side by side on the same seat, while three Brahmins squatting in front of them are interpreting the dream. In an ante-chamber on the right Maya is again portrayed, this time with a Brahmin who is gazing at her admiringly.[57]

In a hall in the palace beneath the previous scene the king is sitting on a throne in conversation with the queen who is sitting opposite him. The royal couple is surrounded by maid servants, and a guard is standing in the doorway. The gestures these secondary figures are making with their hands show that they too are participating in the conversation. In the paintings of Cave II at Ajanta the conversation takes place in a room with in the palace to the left of the city gateway, where the king and queen are again seen side by side on the same seat. In next scene the queen is sitting in a large covered litter which is proceeding out of the palace towards a gateway, though which the route then leads to a second gateway above and slightly to the left, the entrance to Lumbini grove.[58]

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56 Behl, K.B., op. cit., p.89.

57 Schlingloff, Dieter, op.cit., pp. 16-17.

58 Yazdani, G., *Ajanta, The colour and Monochrome Reproduction of the Ajanta Frescoes based on Photography,* Oxford, 1993, pp 1-4.

The queen is standing beneath an Asoka tree and is holding a branch of this tree with her right hand; her left hand is in front of her body. On the right there is a group of women in conversation who do not seem to be involved in the events taking place.[59]

The large number of surviving representations of this central event in the life of a Buddha depict it in a similar fashion, the queen is portrayed standing and holding on the branch of a tree; to her right one or more deities receive the Bodhisatva as he emerges from her hip, while to her left there is a female, who is usually accompanied by several other female figures.[60]

In the uncompleted painting in Cave II at Ajanta the deity is standing with his hands placed together in the ante chamber of a temple; the only part of the group of figures before the temple that has been sketched in is the parasol that is held over the Bodhisatva.[61]

In the scene to the left of the temple, the King is sitting with crossed legs in a hall of the palace, his ministers are standing to the left of him and the Queen is sitting on the right it is probable that the King and the queen are looking at the nurse, who is standing before them holding the child she has just been entrusted with; the portrayal of her, however was not survived.[62]

In a circular pavilion in the royal palace the Bodhisatva is sitting on a low throne; at his feet there is an empty jewel box. There is a woman standing outside the pavilion. who is obviously holding jewelry in her hand that Bodhisatva has presented to her. Yasodhara is sitting to the right of the Bodhisatva on a stool the position of her hands shows that she is talking to him. The Bodhisatva is holding a ring in his left hand which is showing to Yasodhara. There are two female attendants standing behind Yasodhara and five others are sitting on the ground outside the pavilion.[63] To the left of the scene of the first meditation, the king is sitting cross legged in a hall with a flat roof and is conferring with his three brothers, who are sitting on the floor in front of him. The minister and a female attendant are standing behind the king, seated to his left there is another woman who is participating in the discussion and who therefore is

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59 Yazdani, G., ibid.
60 Coomarswamy, A.K., *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, London, 1927, fig. 136.
61 Coomarswamy, A.K., ibid.
62 Schlingloff, op. cit., p. 24, fig.1, 14.
63 Schlingloff, ibid, p. 27, fig. 1, 20.

probably not a servant but the King's wife. In the women's chamber of the palace, an elongated structure with a flat roof and a beamed ceiling, there are musical instruments, toiletry jars and a mirror hanging on the wall, the burning lamps in the foreground indicate that it is night. The Bodhisatva's wife is lying on her left side on the far side of the bed towards its foot; the position of his hands indicates that his thoughts are occupied by what he sees around him.[64]

Cave 2 depicts the facial features are almost identical to those in the Raja with His Retinue, the golden-brown complexions, almost round faces, small bright eyes, full red lips, and short but pointed noses are familiar from the non-Aryan types depicted in the painting of the pre-Christian era. Here the women wear veils over their heads and the men folk elaborate turbans, but the hair style with short locks, fringes falling over the foreheads, are identical in the two paintings. There are no bulging body-curves, no cork – screw curls, and the eyes are not elongated, in fact there is none of the exaggeration associated with the late period.[65]

The important masterpiece of this period is undoubtedly the portrait of *Dying Princess* (the deserted wife of Nanda) in Cave No. 16. The balance of the various linear rhythms are here relished through a subtlety in the composition, which suggests the intuitive truth of the border line of life and death, incipient in Maya, a kind of poetry of tragedy, which must be absorbed as a lesson to keep in mind during one's own pilgrim's progress through life. The panel showing the *Dying Princess* is one of the great masterpieces of the world art in which the soul drama of conflict between authentic and non-authentic life is staged. The flow of paint and the composition seeks value through colour contrast conceived by a genius of height order.[66]

The sweep of the brush, which describes the contours of the woman in the centre of this panel, is characteristic of the mature, Ajanta expressionism. By tilting the head slightly and suggesting the limpness of the figure, through the falling left hand, the painter has evoked the fundamental stance of near death. The solicitude of the three maids, one supporting the woman from behind with left hand outstretched, the other watching anxiously to read the face of the patient, the third bent forward with face distraught, crystallize the intense moment. The supporting cast of the two male

64 Schlingloff, ibid, p .30, fig, 1, 23, 24.
65 Singh, Madanjeet, op. cit., pp. 176-177.
66 Anand, Mulk Raj, op. cit., p. 26.



Plate- 9 The Raja with his Retinue cave no. 10, late 2nd Century or early



Plate- 10 Dying Princess, Cave no. XVI, Ajanta

attendants rushing in from outside, and the two anxious females on the balcony next door, indicate the tension in the atmosphere. The peacock in flight and the bent leaves on the banana tree in soft green shades are suggestive of sadness. The rigid white and grey pillars of the balcony and the hard chair are contrasted to the somber – Ochre red bodies, with the intense jet black hair. The drama of death spreads from within the panel outwards, making the particular statement into a general symbolic truth. The *Karuna*, implicit the Buddha's teaching, is emergent here, from below the surface relation of the paint. Realism goes beyond its western definition into near total expression, because the artist has come from the realization of surface colours to suggest the depths where nature is transformed. The first inspiration to imitate outer reality has obviously been overcome by abstraction of detail.[67] The temptation to record the impression has been conquered here by the courage to simplify paint with sweeping brushstrokes to recreate the melancholy. The felt expression has been elaborated, through objective skill, into the awareness of other men's experiences. The dim awareness of the shadow of death illuminates, with not hysterical flourish, but gently, the atmosphere of suffering beyond the figures.

This is, perhaps, one of the most important paintings in the Ajanta of a period when the early native emotions had begun to be absorbed into contours, with sharply accentuated lines, deliberately filled in with deepening colours. No use is made here of light and shade, but the surface in monochromatic and the figures are almost in relief. The whole composition suggests inner stirrings. The wife is dying of the shock of the 'going away' of the husband, with an emotion, which seems like a subtle portrayal of a faint, or of the slow passing away of all hope, or of the fading into death. This is one of the great moments of Ajanta art, in so far is adumbrates sadness for all time – not as an illusion but as the outer form of the reality of death itself. The combination of linear rhythm with a certain directness of touch emerges here as the evidence of close parallelism between sculpture and painting.[68]

The poetic view of reality, with the consecutive movement of dance, and the living music of the spheres, is shown in the *Flying Apsara* of Cave No.17, symptomatic of the airy flights of the poetry of Kalidasa who was contemporary with this phase of

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67 Schlingloff, op. cit., pp. 54-55.

68 Ghosh, A. and Sarkar, H., *Beginnings of Sculptural Art in South-East India, A colour*, New Delhi, 1967, pl. 3(8).

Ajanta. The flying figures, almost part of the clouds, grouped in this panel, have all the verve, which could not be realized in the treatment of the same theme in stone work earlier and of whom the vibrations has been remotely suggested by the words of the poets. In the same Cave, we see the ultimate mastery of colour scheme and groupings in panel after panel, perhaps the highest and most sustained expression of Ajanta art. The free pagan atmosphere of the earth as heaven with lovely languorous Apsaras and Gandarvas flying about plunges us into the world of painters who's only equal in sensuous self awareness was the bard of Ujjain. Kalidasa had realized in metaphors, the artists here visualize in colours and activate in organic rhythms.[69]

Indra and the Apsaras on the entrance of Cave No.17, the gracious curves of the figure, flying through the blue-tinted foam clouds, with the musicians lifted by the music of their flute, as it were are contrasted to the static *Kinnaras,* half-men and half-birds. And below the fantasy world of the upper air are the people of the earth, in and around their dwellings, as in the Megha-Doota, the girls adorning themselves for their lovers, with oil and fards and lotions, surmounting the earth in unending flight. The contours have the necessary lightness, because the colours used, whites light brown, blue and greens, are less heavy in weight. As they float away from the earth into the empyrean, they stimulate physical desire and conduce to a certain grace in the ascent from the illusory life towards the beyond. The stage has been reached in Ajanta, in this composition, when the sensibility and the imagination are interchangeable. The artist seems to possess both, as also fantasy, which liberate the figures into something he does not yet know of the rhythmic life. Our active respirations at the sight of movement were perhaps anticipated.

The different types are informed with the life breath, until they are individuals as well as symbols. The colour contrasts of the lush landscapes, with the brown, ochre and black figures, and the movement of the breeze in the trees, are some of the finest in Asiatic art. Two of these *Apsaras*, with dreamy eyes, intricate coiffeur and shaking jewelry, are the kind of spirits. In the latter paintings of Cave No. 16 and 17, as in the Palace scene, the sensuous warmth of an elegant life is portrayed as a contrast between the shining splendor of the court and the evanescent feeling of the passing away of things. The faces of these figures though involved in gaiety, are titled in

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[69] Anand, Mulk Raj, op. cit., pp. 29-30,



Plate- 11 The flying Apsara , Cave no. XVII, Ajanta



Plate-12 Indra and Apsara, Cave no. XVII, Ajanta

sadness. The features are individualized. The thicker colours provide a kind of shading, from which the line moves in a gliding movement, with weightless grace, reflecting the flexibility of figures in dance. The curves of the two bodies counterpoised against a certain rigidity in the torso of the woman's body, suggesting the first demure withdrawal at the abrupt approach of the lover. The colour contrast of the dark prince against the fair princess is also deliberately adumbrated. The concentration of the attendants offering drink and other services, accentuate the focal point of the erotic adventure.[70]

Cave 17, depicts two details from the palace pavilion scenes. Prince Visvantara has been banished from the Kingdom and is seen walking out of the palace gate (left). Behind him is very five depicting of a areca nut tree. His wife Princess Madri follows. There is a fascinating depiction of two persons watching from a window. Using a most interesting device to convey the reduced light of the interior, the artist has pointed these individuals in monochrome.[71]

In Cave 26, some of the finest sculptures at Ajanta are to be found. On either side of the entrance are figures of beautiful damsels, each holding a branch of tree under which she stands (opposite); such figures which are frequently seen in doorways, are considered to be auspicious and to symbolize fertility.[72]

(b) Women in Ancient India: Textual Evidence

The position of women in society is one of the most important topics in the history. In ancient Indian texts women are generally treated as a uniform category, and unambiguously educated with the Sudras.[73] As a daughter she should be under the surveillance of her father, as a wife of her husband and as a widow of her son. On the other hand we can see that there was no seclusion of women. They used to move freely in society, often even in the company of their lovers. In social and religious gathering they occupied a prominent position. Women had an absolute equality with

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70 Benoy, K.B., op. cit., pp. 168-169.
71 Benoy, K.B. op. cit., p. 163.
72 Benoy, K.B. op. cit., p. 46.
73 . *Manusmiriti* with seven commentaries, translated with introduction by G. Buhler under the title The Laws of Manu, Oxford, 1886, IX.153.

men in the eye of religion. They could perform sacrifices independently and were not regarded as an impediment in religious pursuits.[74]

In the Vedic age women were not deprived of the advantage of education and were not considered incompetent to study *Vedas* or participated in philosophical discussion. They even composed some of the hymns of the Rigveda.[75] During this age education was mostly centered in the family, brothers, sisters and cosines probably studied together, under the family elders.[76]

It is true, that there is no explicit mention about the arrangement of girls' education but from the references (scattered throughout Vedic texts) to woman seers[77], teachers their active participation in Vedic sacrifices, their investiture of holy thread, their involvement in music and dance, war field, as well as in different vocations, we can decipher that in spite of the absence of institution based training system, girls in Vedic India were not deprived of education.

Upanayana was usually performed at about the age of 9 or 10 and the same age now came to be regarded as the ideal time of marriage for girls. Towards the end of this period (c A.D. 500) parents could not usually keep their daughters unmarried after the age of 12. The discontinuance of *upanayana*, the neglect of education and the lowering of the marriage age, produced disastrous consequences upon the position and status of women.[78] Early marriage put an effective impediment in the higher education of girls. Besides being too young and inexperienced, ceased have any effective voice in the settlement of their marriages.

In post Vedic period, women were now debarred from the study of the *Vedas* and were considered to be unfit to pronounce the Vedic mantras. They were required to obtain knowledge of duty and morality by studying the *puranas* only. Marriage ceremony is started to be the only sacrament for women[79] who could be performed with the Vedic *mantras*. Women were debarred from the *upanayana* or the initiation ceremony.

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74 . Altekar, A.S., *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization*, Banaras, 1956, p. 51.
75 . *Rigveda*, with Sayana's commentary, edited with notes and translated by P. Petuson, third edition, revised and enlarged by S.R. Bhandarkar, Bombay, 1905, 1-145, 179, V- 28, X- 86.
76 . *Rigveda*, X-145, 179
77 . *Rigveda*, 1-126.7; 1.179.1.6; 2.6.8, 5.28.3; 891.1.7; etc.
78 . Altekar, A.S., op. cit., p. 58.
79 . Vishnoi, Savita, *Economic status of Women in Ancient India*, p. 2.

Women students were divided into two classes *Brahmvadinis* and *Sadyovadhus*. The former were lifelong students of theology and philosophy; the latter used to be prosecuting their studies only till their marriage at the age of 15 or 16. *Brahmvadinis* used to aim at a very high excellence in scholarship. Besides studying the Vedas, many of them used to specialize in *purva Mimamsa*, which discusses the diverse problems connected with Vedic sacrifices. *Mahabhasha* speaks of a theologian named *Kasakrtsna* who composed a work on *Mimamsa* called *Kasakritsni* and lady scholars who used to specialize in it, were designated as Kasakrtisnas.[80]

The admission of women to the Buddhist order gave a great impetus to the cause of female education among the ladies in commercial and aristocratic families like the *Brahmavadinis* in *Brahmanical* circles, several ladies in Buddhist families used to lead a life of celibacy with the aim of understanding and following the eternal truths of religion and philosophy.[81] According to the Jain tradition, Jayanti, a daughter of king Sahasranika of Kausambi, remained unmarried and received ordination at the hand of Mahavira after being convinced by him in discussion.

Many educated women used to follow teaching career either out of love or out of necessity and who were not necessarily scholars, were called *Upadhyayanis*, but women who were themselves teachers, were called *Upadhyayas*. Women teachers must have been fairly numerous in society. The tradition of lady scholars is known to Puranas as well; the *Bhagavata*, for instance, refers to two daughters of Dakshayana as experts in theology and philosophy.[82]

Existence of some female vocations proves the validity of the fact. For example, names of *Vidalakari* (basket maker), *Kantakikari* (thorn-workers), *Kosakari* (scabbard maker), *anjanakari* (ointment maker), *pesaskari* (female embroiderer), *vasahpalpuli* (Landeress), *siri* (weaver), *rajayitri* (dyer), *upalapraskini* (grinder of corns) can be mentioned[83].

During the Buddhist epoch the activities of women were confined within certain spheres principally the domestic, social and religious. There are various records which

80 . Padia, Chandrakala, *Women in Dharmasastras "a phenomenological and critical Analysis"*. p. 41.
81 . Altekar, A.S., op.cit., p. 13.
82 . Altekar, A.S., ibid, p. 13.
83 . Ghoshal, Pranti, *Women's Education in Vedic India*, (Article),Women in Dharmasastras, New Delhi, 2009, p.30.

refer to self supporting women who were engaged in a trade or a profession. It is said for example, that a certain woman was the keeper of paddy field; and she gathered and parched the heads of rice, doing the work herself.[84] Another is described as watching the cotton field[85], where she used to sometimes spin fine thread from the clean cotton[86] in order to while away in time. Women also appear to have been capable of functioning as keepers of the burning grounds.

Women could earn the necessary income by spinning and weaving cotton and woolen yarn and piece goods. The Arthasastra of Kautilya lies down that the state should provide special facilities to destitute women to enable them to earn a living by spinning[87].

References to the female soldiers, women's involvement in war[88], their heroic feats makes us suppose that they were provided some military training also. Not only they were able to protect themselves, but in times of emergency, they faced enemy soldiers also. The Rigveda describes her courageous heroic feats in the battlefield where she defeated thousands of soldiers Vispala, the queen of king khela, is another example who was severely wounded in her leg.[89]

A wife in ancient India was known as *Sahadharmini.*[90] In the Vedic age, women enjoyed all the religious rights and privileges which men possessed. Her presence and co-operation were regarded necessary in religious rites and ceremonies.[91] The Rigveda refers to Ghosha and Lopamudra as well versed in the mantras.[92]

Under Buddhism, women fell into two divisions: those who remained in the world as lay-votaries of the religion and those who went forth from the world into homelessness and became bhikkhunis, nuns, sisters or alms-women. They will be called by the last name here on account of their quality of receiving alms.[93]

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84 . Altekar, A.S., op. cit., p. 87.
85 . *Jataka*, edited E.B. Cowell, translated by Robert Chalmers, Delhi, 1997, vol.4-6; 546.
86 . Ibid.
87 . Kautilya, *Arthasastra*, edited by S. Sahstri, Mysore,1919; II- 23.
88 . Rigveda, X-102.2.
89 . *Rigveda*, 1-116.15.
90 . *Rigveda*, V-61.8
91 . *Rigveda*, VIII- 31.5.
92 . Ibid., I-179 and IX-.30-40.
93 . Elliot, Sir Charles, *Hinduism and Buddhism an Historical Sketch*, London, 1921, vol. I, p. 248.

In Jainism and Buddhism marriage was not compulsory for women. They were urged to become nuns without entering the matrimonial bond. Among the nuns of *Therigatha*, the majority consists of women who had renounced the world during their maidenhood. The career thus opened for women by Jainism and Buddhism attracted a large number of talented ladies and offered a somewhat freer status to those who entered the samgha.[94]

Marriage in fact was a religious necessity to both the man and the woman; neither could reach heaven without being accompanied by his duly married consort. The position of the wife was an honored one in the family. In theory she was the joint owner of the household with her husband, though in actual practice, she was the subordinate partner.[95]

In the Vedic age, she was married at about the age of 16 or 17; she could thus devote six or seven years to her Vedic studies before her marriage.[96] It is true that in two passages of the *Rigveda* the word *arbha* has been used to denote the bride and the bridegroom. This expression, however, denotes tenderness rather than childhood. for Vimada who has been described as an *arbha* bridegroom is seen to be defeating his rival in battle and winning his bride. This is possible only in the case of a full grown youth. In another place we find a wife praying for hair growing at the time of puberty.[97]

It now came to be declared that a girl becomes mature not at the age of 13 or 14. but at the age of 10 to 11, when some preliminary symptoms of impending puberty manifest themselves. The proper age of marriage was therefore 10. The age of 8, however, was regarded as the ideal one; marriage in the case of girls corresponded to *upanayana* in the case of boys, and the proper age for the latter was 8. In Ksatriya families, however, girls continued to be married about the age of 14 or 15.[98]

Women could not naturally command respect from their husbands. Not infrequently, parents had to marry their daughters in a hurry, lest the girls should attain puberty before their marriage. The matches arranged under such circumstances were often ill

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94 . Misra, Girija Shankar Prasad, *The Age of Vinaya*, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1972, p. 175.
95 . Altekar, A.S., op .cit., p. 51.
96 . Ibid., p. 57.
97 . *Rigveda*, VII- 91.5.6
98 . Altekar, A.S., op. cit., p. 63.

suited, and women were thus often compelled to spend their lives with unsuitable or unworthy parents. It is painful to find that smriti writers should have come forward to preach the gospel that a wife should always revere her husband as God, even if he was a moral wreck.[99]

In Vedic India wife was generally regarded as the co-owner of the family property along with her husband as the term *dampati* would show. The husband was required to take a solemn vow at the time of the marriage that he would never transgress the rights and interests of his wife in economic matters.[100] A wedding hymn in the Rigveda containing two verses indicates that gifts were sent with the bride to the bridegroom's house.[101]

In case of a girl who was not married or did not choose to marry some provision was made out of the father's property. It would seem that she had not only a share in the property of her father as an unmarried daughter of the family but also the right to stay with her parents and brothers even when she became old.[102]

There is an earlier reference in the Rigveda regarding a daughter's right in the property of her father which was given to her husband at the time of marriage by her brother.[103] This property passed on to her because her separate property became the *stridhana*, as it was called in later times. *Stridhana* was a portion of the bride-price, returned to the bride by her father. The husband therefore had to recognize his bride's ownership in it.

The Vedic literature is silent about the precise scope of *stridhana.* We get an idea of its scope only from the Dharmasastra works. Manu is the earliest writer to give a comprehensive description of *stridhana.* According to him it consists of six varieties; (1-3) gifts given by the father, the mother and the brother at any time; (4) gifts of affection given by the husband subsequent to the marriage; (5-6) and presents given by anybody either at the time of the marriage or at the time when the bride is taken to her new home.[104] Gifts under most of these categories would consist usually of ornaments and costly apparel, and Manu is very vehement in denouncing those who

99 . Altekar, A.S., op. cit., p. 58.
100 . *Rigveda,* X-85-86.
101 . *Rigveda,* X-85.13
102 . *Rigveda,* I-117.7; 11.17.7; X- 39.3
103 . *Rigveda,* I-109.2
104 . *Manusmiriti,* IX,-194.

would deprive women of these presents after their husband's death.[105] We find that down to c. 300 B.C., the right of the widow to inherit her husband's property was not recognized by any jurist. Vedic texts were definitely opposed to this right.[106]

Kautilya states, "The sonless widow, faithful to her husband's bed and living with her elders, shall enjoy her *stridhana* till the end of her life, as *stridhana* is meant for times of distress."[107] He further adds, "The widow remarrying shall be deprived of what she may have inherited from her former husband. But she shall enjoy it if she is desirous of fulfilling her religious obligations."[108]

Manu himself writes in his book that a wife is not to blame if she abandons a husband, who is impotent, insane, or suffering from an incurable or contagious disease.[109] This abandonment of the husband practically amounted to a divorce, for Manu permits such a wife to remarry if her previous marriage was not consummated.[110]

We have only one controversial verse[111] in the *Rigveda* which has sometimes been taken to refer to the existence of *Sati* during this period. The *Atharaveda* also refers to the lying of widow by the dead husband on funeral pyre as an ancient custom of *Rigveda.* The classical writers like Strabo and Diodorus Siculus, as historical instances of *Sati* in India in the 4th century B.C. The latter cities the story of the younger wife of a general named keteus, becoming *sati* in 316 B.C., when her husband died fighting against the Greeks.[112]

The only epigraphic evidence of the performance of sati during this period comes from the Eran Pillar inscription dated 191 (A.D. 150).[113] This is the earliest epigraphic reference of sati in Indian society. A Nepalese inscription of somewhat late period (A.D. 705) refers to queen *Rajyavati* the widow of Dharmadeva following her husband to the funeral pyre.[114] In the non religious literature of this period the post dramatists like Bhasa (*Urubhanga*), Kalidasa (*Rtusmhara*), Sudraka (*Mrcchakatika*)

105 . *Manusmiriti,* III- 52.
106 . *Rigveda,* II-14.2.4
107 . *Arthasastra,* II- 16.
108 . Ibid., II 15.
109 . *Manusmiriti,* IX- 46.
110 . *Manusmiriti,* IX- 79.
111 . *Rigveda,* X- 18.7-8.
112 . Majumdar, R.C., *Classical Accounts of India,* Calcutta, 1960, pp. *240-241.*
113 . Pawar, Kiran (ed.) *Women in Indian History,* Patiala, 1996, p. 60.
114 . Ibid.

and celebrated writers like Vatsyayana, Varahamihira and Banabhatta mention instances of the practice of sati, but none of them mentions of any religious sanction behind this custom.

At last we can say that in the ancient period a daughter was usually well educated and possessed full religious privileges, but she could not offer funeral oblation to her father. The girls were properly educated and married at a mature age in these republics. Cultured parents were often as anxious to get daughters as sons. Such a daughter was regarded as the pride of the family.

CHAPTER - II

WOMEN IN EARLY MEDIEVAL ART

The women occupy a prominent place in Indian history. The previous chapter provides the detailed information regarding the life of women in sculpture. cave paintings and in textual evidences. We find some common themes in sculptures, Ajanta Cave paintings and Eastern and Western school of painting. These scenes are from Jataka stories, Kalpasutra and principle episodes of Buddha's and Mahavira's life. Depiction of deity, Tara and Prajanaparamita is also remarkable for the study of women folk.

(a) Eastern and Western Schools of Painting

The earliest Buddhist books that have survived are from a slightly Indian later period. and on earliest illustrated examples prepared on the Indian subcontinent belong to the ninth century[1]. Quite a few Buddhist palm leaf manuscripts have survived, from the 11^{th} century. These show the continuity of Indian tradition of painting, though the local and the materials have transformed the old technique. They obviously belong to the school of the 'eastern country'. By the eleventh century the Buddhists in the monasteries of eastern India and the Jains in the west and south had begun to illustrate some of their religious books. These books were made of loosely bound palm-leaf folios, usually about two feet long and about two inches high. In the northwest region of the subcontinent birch bark was preferred to palm leaves. Both palm leaf and birch bark books were provided with wood covers.[2]

The illuminated Buddhist manuscripts in the collection were produced for patrons associated with the monasteries of Bihar, West Bengal, and Bangladesh. Buddhism flourished in this region under the enlightened patronage of the Palas, some of whom may have been Buddhists, and other local Buddhist rulers. Donating books to monasteries was deemed an important act of piety. The Buddhists' reverence for their holy books appears to have spread also to the Jains and the Hindus. Like the Buddhists in eastern India, by the eleventh century the Jains in western India began to illustrate their books. Illuminated Jain books, also made from palm leaves and with

1. Pal, Pratapditya: *Indian Painting*, Ahamadabad, 1993, p. 43.
2. Anand, Mulk Raj: *Album of Indian Painting*, Delhi 1973, p. 57.

painted wooden covers, have been found both in western India and in the south.[3] The bulk of the surviving illuminated Buddhist books of Indian origin were produced in Bihar and Bengal during the Pal period (800-1200), but none was discovered in India proper.

The first is a manuscript of the *Prajna Paramita* formerly in the collection of Mr. Vrendenberg, dated 1090 A.D. The second manuscript, of the same text, is in the collection of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, dated 1070-71 A.D. The palm-leaf is soft. The colours are vivid, ochre, red, yellow, black and faint blue. It seems that the outlines of forms were drawn first. Colours were filled in afterwards. The faces have a downcast look. There are decorations of geometric designs, and animals. The clothes and furniture give an idea of how people lived in the early medieval period. Altogether, these Buddhist paintings show that the traditional curvaceous line and glowing colours had survived but have been reinforced by folk vigour. The emotions are more highly charged; colours glow; a new marginal touch has entered; the arrangement of the crowd is still skilful, but often naïve and primitives.[4]

The painters seem to have assimilated new materials and new techniques with changing times, inventing new resilient forms, whenever conditions were favourable for the appearance of fresh shoots on the three of Indian civilization. The lure of the female body remains constant: sublimation into goddess, woman is drawn with passionate yearnings of the artist's fantasy.[5]

The four illuminated leaves from a *Projna paramita* manuscript are as such:

a) *Projna paramita* and scenes from the Buddha's life.
b) Manjusri and scenes from the Buddha's life
c) Scenes from the Buddha's life.
d) The Death of the Buddha.[6]

Altogether there are nine panels and eight narrow bands around the string holes; the paintings on them are in various states of preservation. Each of the bands is filled with a figure with a halo behind her or his head indicating divine status. All of them

3. Pritzker, T: "*The Wall Paintings of Tabo*", Orientations, 20, no.2, February 1989, pp. 38-47.
4. Anand, Mulk Raj, op.cit., p.58.
5. Anand, Mulk Raj, ibid., p.58.
6. Pal, Pratapditya, op.cit., p. 51.



Plate -13



Plate- 14 folio from a Dharanisamgraha Manuscript the Buddha's life



Plate-15 Folio from a Dharanisamgraha Manuscript Buddha's life, Bihar, Nalanda; c.1075

represent serpent deities. The two in A are male, while the others are female. Each painted panel was once framed by borders with red and yellow curlicue or zigzag patterns, those on the inside still being presented the two central panels depicts the godless Projna paramita (a) and the bodhisattva Manjusri (b). Each of the side panels represents one of the Eight Great Miracles from the Buddha's life. The two scenes on leaf A depict his birth at Lumbini and the enlightenment at Bodhgaya. In the birth scene Maya stands holding the *sala* tree, with her sister behind her. The infant's seen emerging from his mother's hip and is watched by a male deity waiting to receive him. Below the new born (who looks more like a boy than an infant) are four pots, no doubt filled with water for the first bath. The scene of enlightenment is represented by remnants of figures of the Buddha and the earth goddess.[7]

Two folios from Bihar, dated c. 1050 A.D. depict three deities on folio A and Bodhisaatta Manjusri on folio B. Although only a portion of the text on A is legible, it is very likely that A is the first folio of the manuscript for several reasons, the preaching Buddha is the first image on the left, the goddess Prajna paramita is in the centre, and the folio has no writing on the reverse. The styles of both the illustrations and the writing identify it certainly as a manuscript of the eleventh century copied somewhere in Bihar.[8]

In the first illumination of leaf A the Buddha is shown preaching and is flanked by two identical crowned and adorning bodhisattvas. Noteworthy is the fact that no striations are indicated on the Buddha's red robe, a characteristic of the earlier illuminations. In the centre of the leaf the goddess Prajna paramita is also engaged in preaching on either side of her head is a lotus, each supporting a book symbolizing wisdom. Her companions are two green, adorning females, both looking up at the goddess. In the third composition unfortunately the deity's head has been badly damaged.[9] Nevertheless, his white complexion and bare torso as well as ornamentation indicate that he is very likely a bodhisattva rather than a Buddha. The gesture of his two hands is rather rare known as *bodhyangi* (limb of enlightenment), it may be displayed by either the transcendental Buddha vairochana or a form of the bodhisattva Manjusri known as Siddhaikavira, "the sole perfected hero," who is

7. Pal & Meech, Pekarik, 1988, pp. 58-61. figs. 10, 11, pl. 4.
8. Pal, Pratapditya, ibid, p. 54.
9. Tucci G. *Tibetal Painted Srolls*, Rome, 1949, pl. a ; Heeramaneck, A.N., *Masterpieces of Indian Painting*, New York, 1966, p. 106, no. 113.

probably intended here. He too is accompanied by two crowned attendants, these of yellow complexion, as is the Buddha at the other end.[10]

The second leaf has only one panel in the center, representing the more conventional form of the bodhisattva Manjusri. Here he holds a lotus stalk with his left hand, the flower supporting a book. The emblem in his right hand may be a jewel. His complexion is green, and he too has an elaborate crown is bejeweled, as are the other deities.[11]

A folio of Prajna paramita and scenes from the Buddha's life from Bihar, Nalanda; dated C-1075 depict the scene at the left extremity of the first leaf depicts the Buddha's birth.

In the Central composition is the goddess Prajna paramita. Her hands from the gesture of turning the wheel of law, and on either side are a lotus supporting a book. The third scene on this leaf depicts the enlightenment of the Buddha at Bodhgaya. The Buddha is being attacked by a lively group of Mara's companions as the earth goddess looks on.[12]

This isolated folio from a *Prajna paramita* manuscript was evidently acquired by Giuseppe Tucci in Tibet. Unfortunately the where about of the bulk of the manuscript is not known, but from this folio it is clear that both the writing and the paintings are of extremely fine quality. In addition, the three scenes from the Buddha's life are each framed by narrow bands with decorative designs. The edges of the leaf are also adorned with similar bands, as is usually the case in Pala manuscript. It should be noted, however, that the bands on the reverse are left unadorned.[13]

The birth of the Buddha is represented in the panel on the right Clutching the branch of a tree, his generously endowed mother stands in pronounced *contrapposto* supported by her sister. In keeping with the convention, Maya's complexion is yellow and her sister's green. Besides them stand Indra, holding the parasol and a dark blue female deity whose identification is uncertain but who has replaced the customary Brahma. The infant Buddha is shown twice, first emerging from his mother's right hip

10. From the Nasli and Alice Heeramonack Collection Museum Associates Purchase A. M. 71-1-43; B, M72-1-21.
11. Pal, Pratapditya, op.cit., p. 55.
12. Saraswati, S.K. Paljugerchitrakala 1978, pp. 40-42.
13. Huntington, S.L. & Huntington, J.C., *"Leaves From the Bodhi Tree"* 1990, pp. 190-91,pl. 59.



Plate- 16 Folio from a Pancharaksha Manuscript of a Goddess, Bihar, 1160/61



Plate- 17 Folio from a Pancharaksha Manuscript of a Goddess Mahapratisara, Bihar, 1160/61

with his hands clasped in adoration, of if thanking her for delivering him safely, and then standing like a statue between her and Indra. This second representation probably symbolizes the seven steps that the infant took immediately after his first bath to announce his spiritual sovereignty over the earth.[14].

Manuscript A shows goddess and B depicts goddess Mahapratisara, these manuscripts can be dated to 1160/61. One of the five Pancharaksha goddesses is represented on each leaf. Each illustrated page is also adorned with decorative bands over the string holes and at the extremities. No such ornamental bands occur on the leaves other sides. Red and yellow with touches of blue are the principal colours used for the geometric and floral motifs that constitute the decorative designs. The goddess on leaf A is represented against a fiery aureole, and the one on B against a red background within shrive some foliage is visible behind each shrive.[15]

The goddess on leaf A (which leaf includes the colophon on the reverse) is awesome, with a large over hanging belly, a ferocious face, and a green complexion. With her six arms she seems to exhibit (clockwise from lowest proper right) a battle-axe, an arrow, a thunderbolt, a sprig of leaves, the gesture of admonition (*tarjani-mudra*) and a nose. However, there appears to have been little consistency in the description of the Pancharaksha goddesses. The identification would seem to be reinforced by the fact that the text ends on the other side with the statement that, "here ends the charm describing the Raksha goddess Mahamanatranusarini."[16]

The second goddess, who is yellow complexion and has eight arms, is less difficult to identify, even though all her emblems cannot be clearly recognized. She brandishes a sword with her uppermost right hand, and two of the other attributes are the bow and the arrow. The left hand against her chest exhibits the gesture of admonition. This goddess is Mahapratisara, and as is usual, she is represented as a placid figure. This goddess protects women during their pregnancies and ensures safe deliveries.[17]

The divine figures represented on these three leaves ((a) Goddess Tara (b) Vajrayana Deities (c) Vajrayana Deities) can be identified as follows leaf A includes only a single figure of green Tara in the middle, the side bands being adorned with a

14. Tucci, G., op. cit., pl. a.
15. Heeramaneck, A.N., op. cit., p. 106, pl. 116.
16. Saraswati, S.K., op. cit., p. 48.
17. Pal, Pratapditya, op.cit., p.67.

decorative design. The enshrined deity in the middle of the second leaf is an esoteric form of the Bodhisativa Manjusri known as Guhya-Manjuvajra. The red figure at the left edge is probably the bodhisattva khadagapani, and the figure at the other end is the Bodhisatta Avalokitesvara. The central figure on C represents one of the angry deities.[18] White in complexion, his emblems are (clockwise from his lowest proper right hand) a thunderbolt, a noose, a cot's leg, an elephant good, and a bell. The representations of angry deities are animated by the vigorous pastures of the figures as well as by the red-orange flame design of the background with leaping tongues. The larger number of deities with varied complexions, multiple limbs, and diverse garments add to the visual appeal of these illustrations.[19]

There are little palm leaf and, later, paper manuscripts, about the lives of Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, and of his other incarnations. Of these *Kalpasutra* of Bhadrabahu is the most popular. As in the case with the Buddhist manuscripts of eastern India, no Jain illuminated book has been found so far that can be dated earlier than the eleventh century. This is rather surprising, since the Jains are very diligent about preserving their heritage. The museum's palm-leaf folios indicate that even after paper had been adopted by some Jains, palm-leaf manuscripts continued to be produced, perhaps in places remote from major centres of manuscript production such as Patan or Ahmadabad in Gujrat. After the introduction of paper, the two texts that proved to be more popular than others were Kalpasutra and the Kalakacharyaktha. The Kalpasutra is the most important canonical work of the Jains, which is why it is the choice text for dedication. The Kalpasutra contains more than the sacred precepts or monastic rules.[20]

The majority of the Jain manuscripts in the collection are of the *Kalpasutra.* It need hardly be emphasized that usually only the first two parts of the Kalpasutra, the lives of the Jains and the genealogies of the elder, are illustrated. The western Indian figures are proportionately shorter and stockier, while those in the Buddhist illustrations are more elegantly formed. Most distinctive are the figures faces, with characteristically looped chin, long, pointed nose, and of course the protruding further eye when the face is shown in three quarter view. This idiosyncrasy is occasionally

18. Heeramaneck, A.N., op. cit., pp. 106,108, pl. 117.
19. Pal, Pratapditya, op. cit., p. 61.
20. Anand, Mulk Raj, *Album of Indian Painting*, Delhi, 1973, p. 57.



Plate-18 Balamitra of Bharukaccha and his wife, folio from the Kalpasutra and Kalkacharya Katha Western Indian School, Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, 14th century

encountered in the palm-leaf manuscripts of eastern India but in a restrained manner. Generally in palm-leaf manuscripts of both traditions the figures are so small that the extension is no prominent. In Jain paper manuscripts, however, because of the larger folio and painted compositions, not only is the distortion more pronounced, but it appears as if the fourteenth century western Indian artists deliberately made this into a hallmark of their style. J.P. Losty has explained this unusual feature as a technical difficulty on the part of the artist when moving from the three-quarter view of earlier pictures to the strict profile of the late sixteenth century. There may have been other reasons as well. In religious art an idiosyncrasy can easily become a convention and may have no reasons as well. In religious art an idiosyncrasy can easily become a convention and may have no rational meaning.[21]

The illustrations of the paper manuscripts show stronger stylization and distortion of the figures than do earlier illuminations, where greater naturalism prevails. Although the emphasis is on the narrative, within a given composition the figures interact with one another through formal ritual gestures and display little emotion. There is much keener interest in the designs of the garments and textiles in the paper manuscripts than in the earlier palm-leaf books. This is apparent both in the dhotis and saris warn by lay figures as well as in the cushions, bedspreads, and canopies. Unlike those in the eastern Indian Buddhist illustrations, where they rarely worn blouses except in the birth scene of the Buddha, women in Jain illuminations always wear a blouse made from colourful material. In fact, these Jain paintings are a rich source for the study of contemporary textile designs, for which Gujarat was famous all over India and beyond. While few earlier textiles have been preserved in the destructive Indian climate, these pictures do demonstrate that both the tie & dye and block-printing techniques were popular and that the international reputation of Gujarat as a major centre of fine cottons was truly justified.[22]

Perhaps the most significant difference between the illustrations on palm leaf and paper manuscripts is in the colouring. The colouring in palm-leaf manuscript illustrations both on the folios and covers restricted to the primary hues of blue, yellow, and red and a few others, such as green, white, and black, with particular emphasis being given to the red, which was preferred background colour.

21. Losty, J.P., The Art of Book in India, London, 1982, p. 44.
22. Khandalaavala, K. & Chandra, M.: *New Documents of Indian Painting*, Bombay, 1969, p. 32.

Occasionally indigo – blue was used for the background. The favourite for the complexion of the figures was yellow, with black for the hair. The artists used a richer palette with gold, ultramarine, brilliant crimsons, and purples to create, in the best examples, sumptuously bright and glossy surfaces. It is generally believed that gold was introduced sometime early in the fifteenth century and blue, both ultramarine and lapis lazuli, about 1450. Thereafter these two colours became the favourites and red lost ground. Both gold leaf and gold paint were employed. In the case of the former, the entire area to be painted was covered in gold leaf before the outlines were drawn in black.[23]

Dancers and musicians, devotees and monks fill the border decoration of every page.[24] Above all, this manuscript shows that under the impetus of the new movement the painters of Gujarat were evolving a new style in which Persian elements played an important part. The illustrator also shows a greater understanding of the landscape and of the social environments. In the second half of the fifteenth century Vishnavas also adopted the Western Indian technique of illustrating some of their books such as the *Gitagovinda*[25] and *Balagopala*[26] *Stuti.* These manuscripts, though they follow the Jaina technique, show a liveliness, a sense of movement and an emotional understanding which is different from the matter of fact Jaina painting so hide bound by the stereotyped tradition.

There is, however, every possibility that the painters were not always Jainas and they must have worked for the Hindus as well, but unfortunately illustrated Hindu manuscripts discovered so far, are very limited in number.[27]

The female figure is treated artistically. The forehead marked with a *tilak* is narrow, the rounded face has a double chin, the breasts are full, the nose is sharp and pointed and the *padol* – shaped eyes are elongated with collieries. No attempt has been made to distinguish the planes. The surface is divided into various panels, each panel depicting a part of the story. The artist was a firm believer in careful finish and his viewpoint is clearly emphasized in the painstaking manner in which he has

23. Pal, Pratapditya: *Indian Painting,* Ahmadabad, 1993, pp. 82-83.
24. Nawab, S.M.: *Jaina Chitrakalpadruma I* (Gujrati), Ahmadabad, 1936, figs. 114-142,165.
25. Majumdar, M.R., "*A Newly Discovered Illuminated Gita Govinda* M.S., from Gujrat," *Journal of the University of Bombay*, vol. X (N.S.), Part 2, September, 1974, pp. 119-131.
26. Khandalavala, Karl, "*Leaves from Rajasthan,*" *Marg,* vol. IV, no. 3, (1950), pp. 1-24, 49-56, for miniatures of Bhagaqvata Purana,etc.
27. Chandra, Moti & Shah, P. Umakaant, *New Documents of Jaina Painting,* Bombay, 1975, p. 15.

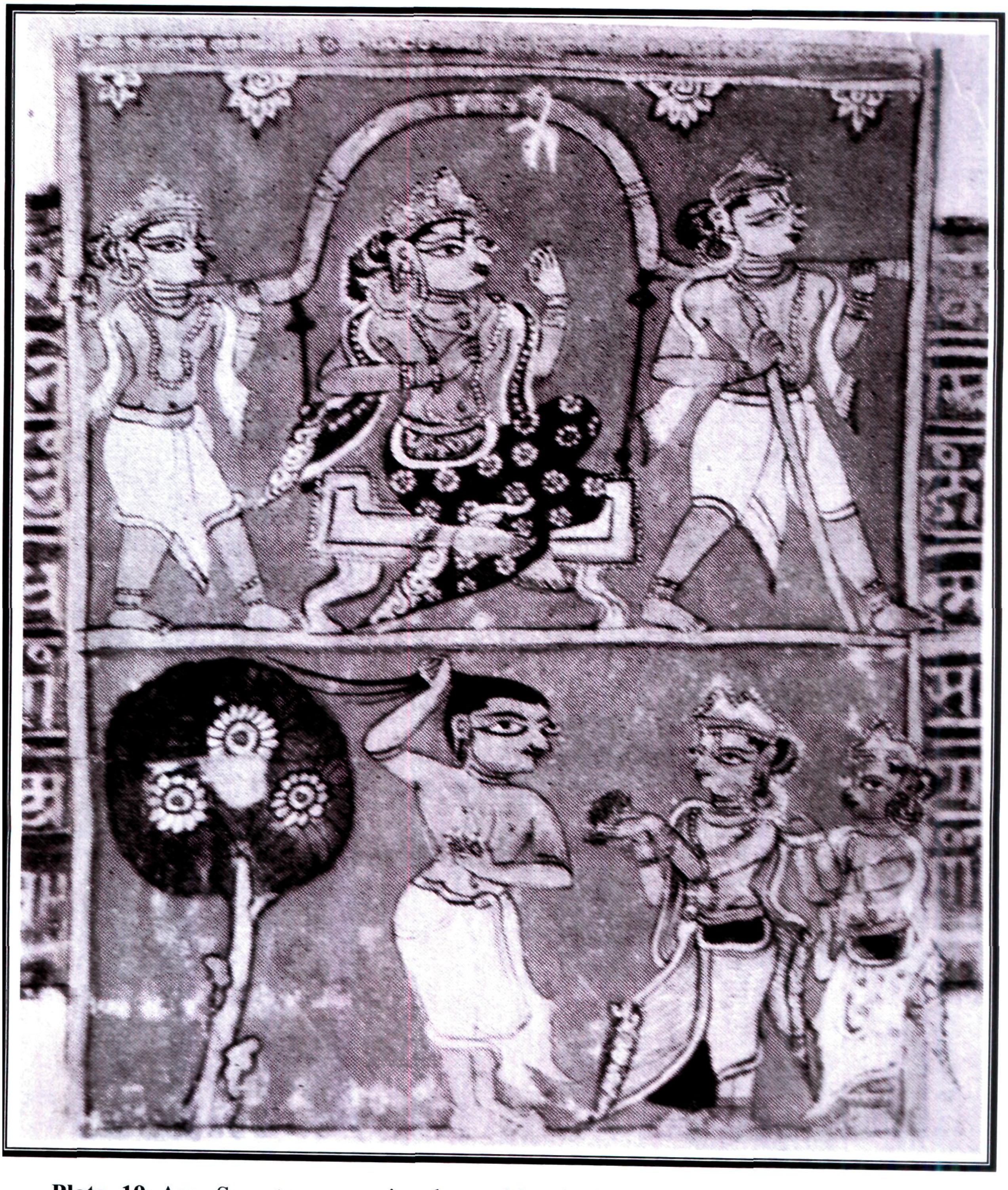


Plate- 19 Arya Suvrata, renouncing the world and other scenes, dated 1439, folio from Kalpasutra painted at Mandu, Western Indian School, National Museum, New Delhi

represented the details of the textile patterns. The treatment of the landscape is simple. The water is represented with basket pattern, and the hills, trees, birds and animals. though treated decoratively, retain certain peculiar charms of their own.[28]

There is no attempt at perspective and the entire composition is divided into panels depicting different episodes of the story. In keeping with the convention of the Western Indian School, angularity is present in the delineation of the human face, but unlike the majority of the manuscripts that have come from Gujrat, the nose is not markedly beaky and the point of the chin not so sharp. The projecting farther eye is, however, present. The structure of the face is also different in some respects from that seen in the general run of illustrated manuscripts from Gujarat. Though we find the same short neck, long oval eyes, and receding rounded double chin, yet the head in our illustrations is flat at the top in comparison with the usually rounded head seen in most of the illustrations from Gujarat. Another difference is the noticeably narrowed forehead dosing almost vertically from its commencement at the bridge of the nose. and not sloping backwards.[29]

In many western Indian miniatures it is not possible to distinguish sex by reference to the treatment of breasts, but in the *Kalpasutra* the treatment of the breasts is naturalistic. The women have firm round breasts, both of which are clearly indicated. The hands and the feet in the Kalpasutra are fairly well drawn and the nails are indicated by white dots. At many places recourse is taken to *mudras* or hand gestures to express feelings. In common with the western Indian convention the male waist in the *Kalpasutra* tends to fullness while the female waist in consonance with the traditional concept of beauty is narrow, but not quite as narrow as in the usual Kalpasutra manuscripts.[30]

In the paintings of the *Vasanta Vilasa*, however, a new direction is found in the evolution of the Western Indian School. Here we are not faced by a hieratic art bound down by endlessly repeated iconographic formulae adopted from the life of the Jinas but a love poem singing the glories of the spring and describing the behaviour of men and women in love. Rising up to the spirit of the poem the western Indian painting

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28. Chandra, Moti, *Jain Miniature Painting from Western India*, Ahmadabad, 1949, pp. 33-34, figs. 54-78.
29. Chandra, *Moti, Studies in Early Painting*, Bombay, 1970, p. 65.
30. Chandra, Moti, Ibid. p. 66.

though still maintaining its traditional mode of expression somewhat thawed from its icy coldness with the result that the movement of the figures becomes livelier and the landscape serves as an appropriate backdrop for the drama of love and spring.[31]

The figure drawing follows the convention of the Western Indian School in angular draughtsmanship and the extension of the farther eye. But here as well there is a definite departure from the stereotyped poses of the Jain miniatures. The pastures gain mobility and the figures became more animated. Though in one type of figure the old physical norm with an exaggerated chest and very sharp angularity of features persists, in another type the old rigidity is definitely relaxed, the linear draughts man ship is not so angular and its geometrical straightness is broken by short rippling curves in the body contours and to a certain extent in the treatment of costumes. It is also significant placed well orbed breasts in the figures of women are the harbingers, as it were, of a new tradition in the first half of the sixteenth century.[32]

The figures of dancing women appear regularly as border decoration, one being perfectly Indian in type and the other with round face seems to have been inspired by the Perso-Mongol type. In keeping with the rich décor of the Devasano Pado *Kalpasutra* the composition becomes more elaborate and the numbers of episodes from the life of the Jinas are considerably increased. But in spite of all the richness of decoration, brilliance of colour and elaboration of details the paintings in the *Kalpasutra* section show a stereotyped technique in which the dolt like arrangement of the figures lack movement and are hardly convincing.[33]

Two folios from a Kalpasutra manuscript, Gujarat; c.1350 depict worship of Parsvanatha and Instruction by monks. Folio 'A' shows, on the left is an enthroned figure of Jina Parsvanath, identified by his shake hood, seated within a temple. On the right under a canopy stand four worshippers who are identified by inscriptions above their heads. The three males are Vikrama, Rajasimha, and Karmana. The female at the rear is Hiradevi. The illustration 'B' is divided into three section. In the larger, upper register the principal monk is seated on an elaborate chair with his right arm extended in the gesture symbolizing a discourse. The lower register is divided into two sections

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31. W. Morman Brown: *The Vasaanta Vilasa*, New Haven, 1963, Chandra, Moti, ibid, p. 69.
32. Chandra, Moti: ibid, p. 70.
33. Chandra, Moti, *Jain miniature Painting from Western India*, p. 38, figs. 93-105; Lalita Kala, No. 12, October 1962, pp. 9-15.



Plate-20 Worship of Parsvanatha, Folio from a Kalpasutra Manuscript, Gujarat, c.1350



Plate- 21 Instructions by Monks, folio from Kalpasutra Manuscript, Gujarat, c.1350



Plate- 22 Kosha Dance before the Royal Archer, Kalpasutra Manuscript, Gujarat or Rajasthan, 1475-1500 A.D.



Plate- 23 Birth of Mahavira, Kalpasutra Manuscript, Gujarat or Rajasthan, c. 1500

with two nuns clearly separated from two ladies. The nuns on the left are identified as Dharama (?) Kantiganini and Sri Subrataprabhamahattara, who is described as sishya, or "disciple", of the two lay women on the right only the one in front is identified, as Hiradevi, who is described as the Chief hearer (*mukhya Sravika*).[34] In each illustration the colored is used as a background, and each composition is bounded by a yellow border. The monks and nuns wear white robes, but the lay person is elegantly dressed in costumes of mauve, green and red. The hair of both sexes is arranged in a bun and adorned with comb like floral decorations. The women are more sumptuously ornamented, and the men wear substantial beards.[35]

A folio from Gujarat depicts Kosha dancer before the royal archer. This is an incident from the life of Sthulabhadra, one of the Jain pontiffs whose hagiographies from the subject matter of the second book of the *Kalpasutra*. The animated and graceful dancer wearing a green blouse is the courtesan Kosha, who was Sthulabhadra's misters for twelve years before his conversion. Thereafter, the local king bestowed Kosha upon his charioteer, who tried to impress her with his skill in archery not to be outperformed, Kosha demonstrated her own ability by placing a needle vertically upon a heap of mustard seeds, covering it with flower petals and dancing on top the charioteer was most impressed and offered her a reward Kosha. However, replied that while her skill was required by practice, Sthubhadra's achievement was of a much higher order, for he had succeeded in subduing the passions. The charioteer then converted to the Jain faith and Kosha became a nun.[36]

A folio shows scene of Mahavira birth. In this illustration, a Queen Irisala is stretched out on a couch with the infant Mahavira, who is simply a miniature version of the adult figures, placed like a doll in her lap. As does a grownup Jina, the infant makes the gesture of reassurance with his right hand a maid attends upon the queen, and above them two females flank an auspicious water pot.[37]

The scene on the left depicts a rather elaborate version of Neminatha birth his mother is stretched out on a bed in a pavilion with the infant in the crook of her arm. A

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34. Pal, Pratapditya: *Indian Painting*, Ahmadabad, 1993, p. 87.
35. Pal, Pratapditya, ibid, p. 88.
36. From the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, Museum Associates Purchase M. 72-53-16; Pal, Pratapditya ibid., p. 113.
37. Brown, W.N., *A Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue of Miniature Painting of the Jaina Kalpasutra as Executed in the Early Western Indian Style*, Washington, 1934, p.3., figs, 17.

female companion stands in front holding what may be a fan, even if it looks like a scarf. The scene on the right is divided into two sections. On top Nemi rides on a horse toward his bride, but below he turns back from the palace in a chariot after hearing the cries of the animals waiting to be slaughtered for the wedding feast.[38]

This illustration depicts scene of Sarasvati Abduction. In the upper half of this illustration king Gardabhilla, riding his horse, meets Sarasvati and her companion Sarasvati was Kalaka's sister and was ordained as a nun. Gardabhilla was at once smitten by Sarasvati and abducted her, which is depicted in the lower section. Rather than being carried on his horse, she is on the shoulders of one of his attendants[39]

Although the nuns are fully robed, beneath the transparent material the artist has prominently delineated their breasts, there by clearly indicating their sex. Such direct exposure of nun's bodies is not commonly encountered in Jain book illuminations. The artist was fairly good at rendering horses, which are much better drawn here than they usually are in such illustrations.[40]

(b) Malwa School

Malwa paintings in the seventeenth century derived its inspirations from the popular themes of Sultanate India. The subject matter of the Malwa illustrations in the seventeenth century, for example, the *Ragmala*, the *Krishnalila*, the *Nayikabheda*, the *Durgapatha*, etc., were especially popular in the fifteenth century, some of the themes, like the *Ragmala*, were fashioned during that earlier age. Consequently the roots of the Malwa paintings of the seventeenth century should be traced back to the Sultanate period in spite of the fact that the earliest document in Malwa style is not known prior to the seventeenth century. Although Malwa was once an important centre of culture and art in the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries, one must not forget in the late sixteenth-seventeenth centuries after the Mughal conquest, it was reduced to a neglected stage.[41]

A *Ragmala* series now in Bharat Kala Bhavan (acc. Nos. 9145-50, 9857-62) is perhaps the earliest evidence of the Malwa group, and may be dated as early as c.

38. Brown, W.N., ibid., p. 3, fig. 40.
39. Heeramaneck, A.N., Ibid, p. 120, pl. 139.
40. Pal, Pratapditya, *Indian Painting,* p.124.
41. Krishna, Anand, *Malwa Painting*, p. 15, Bharat Kala Bhavan, 1963.

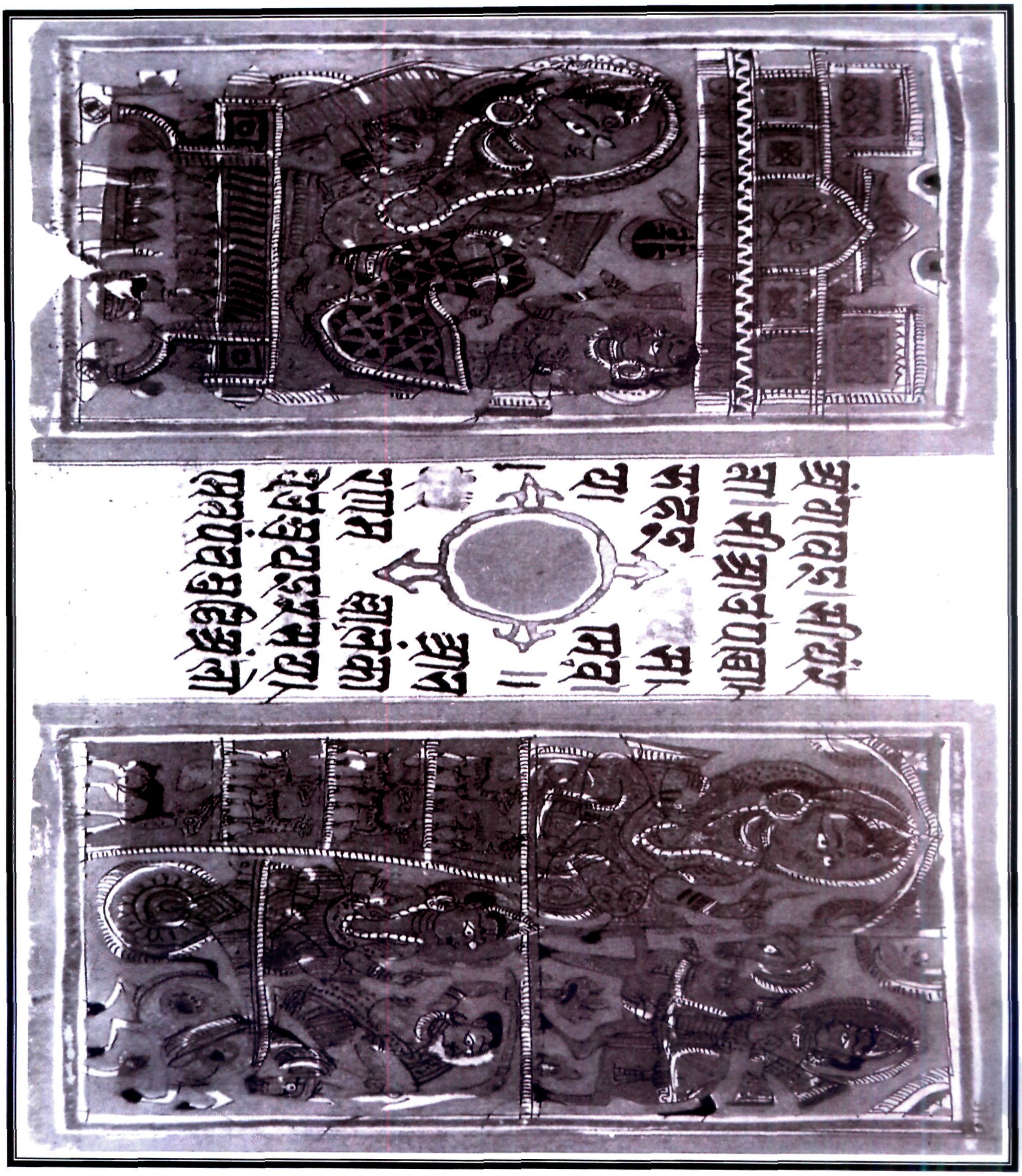


Plate- 24 Neminath's birth (Left); Neminath renunciation (Right), Kalpasutra Manuscript, Gujarat or Rajasthan, c. 1502

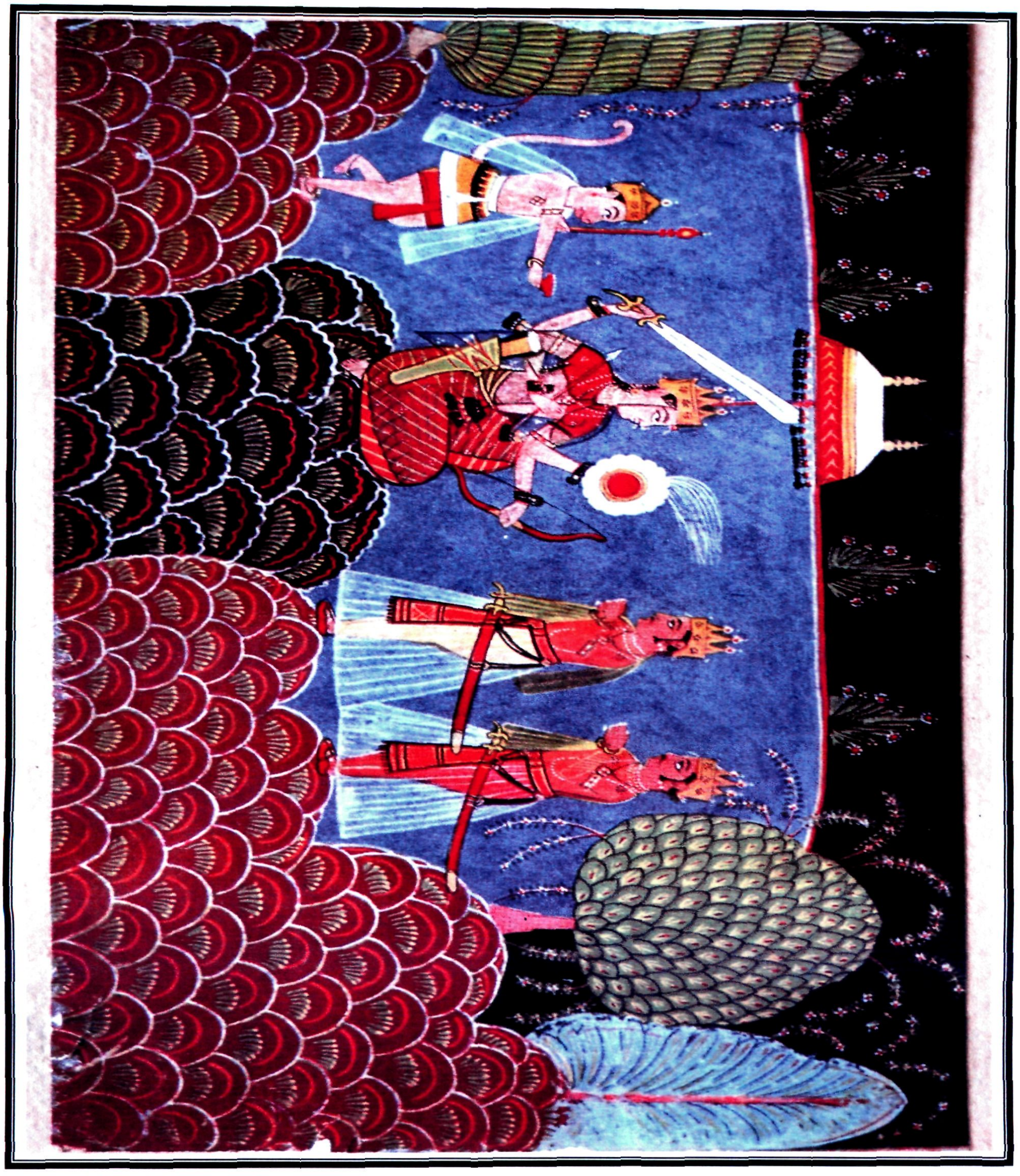


Plate- 25 Raja Surata and Samdhi the vaisya, wait upon the Goddess, scene from Durgapatha, c. 1680 A.D., Bharat Kala Bhawan

1600 A.D. or still before. This series is an extension of the Sultanate tradition including the *Charupanchasika* style.[42] These accomplished illustrations, with powerful expression of gay human and natural forms present attractive backgrounds with dense trees and overhanging stately clouds. These characteristics were generally followed by the Malwa painting of c. 1650 AD. Inspite of their early date the *Ragmala* paintings represent a maturity in style. In *Ragmala* paintings the human figures are usually slow moving.

In 1634 A.D. manuscript of *Rasikapriya* which is scattered among various collections is a landmark of the Malwa School.[43] Besides its being the earliest known document of Malwa illustrations, it helps us top point some of the essential qualities of this school and to determine their relationship with the earliest traditions. The arrangements are simple and in a distant way might be related to the Chavanda series of 1606 A.D. But in details the individual character of the Malwa style is perceptible. for example, in the selection of characteristic tones of colour, in human and architectural forms, or in the decorative trees. Slim and vivacious human figures appear against vast stretches of brilliant colour patches, while only a few types of trees which are primitive in form are introduced. However in a few scenes the women, with flexed and charming gestures are expressive of love sentiments. Thus, the Malwa illustrations, from the earliest examples, appear to be closely associated with Hindi poetry which witnessed a revival in the sixteenth century. The two follow a number of parallelisms for example, the setting are just the same. It is nothing surprising if there had been some Vaishnava influence over the illustration. The *Rasikapriya* miniatures reveal a number of other characteristics. Typical regional dress, including the extremely short *choli* (bodice) on the women is shown; the skirt are generally made from a striped cloth.[44] These illustrations are distinguished by careful finish. hence were presumably produced by some masterly hands. The tall and slender figures and the naturalistic treatment of their faces obviously attempt to neutralize, the force of older forms. The treatment of drapery, the floral designs at the bottom or the arabesques on the rug imply the inevitable Mughal influence. The illustrations impress us with their simplicity, colour schemes as well as the dignified movements

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42. Krishna, Anand, "*An Early Ragmala painting*", Art Orientalist, Vol. IV (Washington, 1961). figs. 37-39.
43. National Museum, acc. No. 40 19/24 etc. Khandalavala, karl, "*Leaves from Rajasthan*" fig. 15 Marg, vol. 4, no. 3, 1950.
44. Krishna, Anand, op.cit., p. 15.

of the human figures. *Amour* (Sringara Rasa), the main themes of the text and the illustrations is expressed through bodily movements and the colour patterns. Nevertheless, the blank facial expressions and the staring, ovaloid eyes militate against the expressiveness and liveliness of the scenes.[45] The Malwa painting seems to have ripened to complete maturity soon after the early period of the *Rasikapriya* illustrations.[46] This school represents a more tamed style with sweetish human faces, attractive colour schemes etc.

The *nimatnama* manuscript depicts basically the Shirazi style of Persian painting. At the same time certain very definite Indian elements are presented, many women appear Indian both in costume and physique.[47]

The *Nayikabheda* tradition in both Sanskrit and Hindi literature realized the hero and heroine by identifying them with Krishna and Radha respectively. This procedure was probably based on the background of medieval literature in which they were depicted as love gods. In the *Nayikabheda* tradition, as well as in poetry, the hero and the heroine appear to be as human as possible in spite of their semi-divine character, and not only in the expression of their love sentiments but also in the depiction of the surroundings in which they move. Yet, the divine aspect of their personality is never overlooked in poetry, usually the hero and the heroine bear the poetic epithets of Krishna and Radha (or a gopi) respectively, and in the illustrations the hero is depicted according to Krishna's iconography (a few exceptions excluded), which seems to have been based on the idols worship in that period. For example, it seems rather incongruous that Krishna climbs a tree while stealing the costumes of the nude, bathing gopis with his wood sandals on parallel scenes appear in some of the Bhagavata episodes which depict almost the same themes; only a hairline distinction divides some of the *Krishnalila* and the pure *Nayikabheda* illustrations. In a few instance, Krishna and Radha are replaced by Rama and Sita but does not seem to have gained much popularity in Indian painting.[48]

45. Khandalavala and others, *Miniature Paintings*, nos. 50a,b,c, fig. 46.
46. W.G. Archer: *Indian Painting*, London, 1956, 8-9, pl. I.
47. Krishna, Anand, op.cit., p. 38.
48. Kesava's Rasikapriya, op.cit., 530, 16.

Durgapatha illustrations are preserved in Bharat kala Bhavan (colour plate B.K.B. acc. No. 1412), discovered in the Malwa group are dateable to c. 1670 A.D. This group is represented Sanskrit love poem (Amaru Sataka).

Apbhramsa paintings are western Indian paintings. These paintings are derived from higher art style i.e. probably from court. These paintings represented graceful Indian female type in profile, or attractive and colour lotus pond in the *Nimat Namah* illustrations. The Apbhramsa drawings are usually rough and careless and cannot compare with the elegance of style and richness of expression found in the Indian court style illustrations.[49] The Apbhramsa style was also influenced on the Malwa, Gujarat and Rajasthani schools etc.

Ragmala (literally, "garland of melodies") is a medieval classification of Indian *Ragas* and *Raginis* (melodies). At least since the time of the *Brihaddesi* by Matanga (17th century AD), we begin to find the groping of certain melodies together in the form of the *Bhasha Gitis*.

The *Sangitopanishadsaroddhara* by Sudhakalasa by 1303 A.D.[50] is the first known text wherein some of the melodies are styled as *Vibhashas* or dependent female associate forms of certain *Ragas*. This seems to have been accepted as a pictorial motif; however, it is from the fifteenth century A.D. that the first pictorial representations of this theme in the Apabhranisa style which have survived to the present day. Here again we find the different *Ragas* and the *Bhashas* simply in their iconographic forms. It appears that sometime in the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries, which coincided with the rise of the new music style in North India as well as with the Nayikabheda.[51] Love poems in Hindi that the *Ragamala* system began to evolve.

The human aspect of the *Ragas* and *Raginis* was fully expressed in Rajasthani painting in which the Malwa School played an important role. It appears that at least since the early seventeenth century each of the sub-schools supplied conventionalized forms for the visualization of the *Ragamala* family, which were followed by the succeeding generations. A *Ragini* represents one of the different types of *Nayikas* (heroines) dedicated to her lord, the *Raga*. The *Ragas* and *Ragini's* were generally

49. Archer, W.G., *Central Indian Painting*, pl. II.
50. Krishna Anand, op.cit., p. 24. Ed. by U.P. Shah, Gaekwad Oriental Sanskrit Series, No. 133, Baroda, 1961.
51. Sarabhai, M., Nawab: *Masterpieces of the Jain Kalpasutra*, Ahmedabad, 1956, p.1 and ff.

used as love themes in music and poetry. This illustration essentially belongs to that group too.[52]

This illustration is describing the Ragini Lalita poetry. Sri Raga, the Lord, helped Lalita in dressing up and putting on ornaments as well as the makeup. This so much enhanced his loves for her that, so to say "Sri Raga" identified himself with Lalita, who in turn took the form of the lover (but soon) the night wore down. The accompanying illustration shows the *Ragini* in sleep, whisked by her maid, while her lover appears at the door of her bed chamber. The protruding ends of the costumes and the caves of the architecture in the exergue introduce an informal atmosphere and are derived from Apbhramsa tradition.[53]

Asavari a *kirati* (a savage girl), is wife of the Raga Megha Malar, the Raja of the *Kiratas*. She is scantily attired in peacock plumes and similar rare and priceless wild embellishments adorn her body. The couple hunts in the forsts and hills, seeking her lord, Asavari reached the Malaya mount full of sandal trees entertwined with snakes. The serpents abandon the trees and coil round the *Ragini*". The illustration shows a rare sense of coloration in the form of bold and contrasting patches of yellow, chocolate and black while on the other hand the linear representations of the hill and the twisting forms of the monkey, peacock or the tree enhance the serene beauty of the principle figure.[54]

The *Nayikabheda* theme continued to be a popular subject of illustrations during the third quarter of the seventeenth century as in the earlier period. Usually the traditional compositions were followed. Yet the artist found opportunities for his personal depiction of tender feelings, fresh colour patterns, and idealized three-forms or, in some cases, his own landscapes. The traditional knowledge of portraying love illustrations was fully utilized in the *Nayikabheda* paintings of the Malwa School, but was considerably modified, according to the requirements of the individual series. In the miniature reproduced here, the main interest lies in the idealized setting of the blossoming trees and the sensitive movement of highly accomplished vines, both of which produce a sublime effect of light and shade. Moreover, the expense of pleasing

52. Krishna Anand, op.cit., p. 42.
53. Krishna Anand, op.cit., p. 43.
54. Moti Chandra, "*Illustrated Manuscript of Mahapwana* etc.", *Lalit Kala*, No. 5 (April 1959), fig. 6.



Plate- 26 Lalit Ragini, from a Ragmala Series, c. 1650 A.D., Bharat Kala Bhawan



Plate- 27 Asavari Ragini from a Ragmala Series, c. 1650 A.D., Bharat Kala Bhawan



Plate- 28 the love stricken Gopi, an illustration from Kasava Dasa's Rasikapriya, c. 1670 A.D. Bharat Kala Bhawan

background offers an appropriate setting for the scene. Quite possibly the pink background sets belonged to a particular sub-school of the Malwa group.[55]

Among Krishna's amorous sports, the popular *Chiraharana* scene was often portrayed in illustrations. Krishna, once he had discovered the male bathing *gopis* stole their dress and preaching himself on a tree overhanging the bathing tank, watched them beg for their return. A number of symbolic interpretations of this episode have been proposed. It is significant that Krishna appears here in Vishnu's complete iconography along with his own special attributes (presumably taken from the seventeenth century idols). Nevertheless, it depicts Krishna in one of his love frolicks. The main scene impresses us as a beautiful design, having the idealized and profuse tree accompanied with extended sprays of creepers. The same point of view is manifested in the treatment of the garments or even the standing *gopis*. The popularity of this theme in painting may be due to the scope the painter found here, to depict the nude female forms.[56]

This illustration shows a documentary representation of the successive events connected with the episode and therefore the miniature consists of a number of scenes, each separated by means of a rectangular frame. Consequently, in totality of effect, the miniature gives us an impression of a colour mosaic. The two naughty sons of Kubera, enjoying bathing sports with their nude girls, were cursed by Narada and in spite of Siva's protective hand on them were transformed into the two trees. One day after that elapse of Aeolus, baby Krishna released them from their captivity and restored them to their original selves. "As Krishna tied with a pounding stone, forcibly uprooted the trees, there appeared two Yakshas, the sons of Kubera." Thus such scenes prove the superiority of Krishna over other gods. The descriptive nature of the illustration hardly leaves any scope for the pictorial values to make an impact. However the natural surroundings add to the decorativeness of the scenes.[57]

The present picture shows the great style of Baz Bahadur as it had developed in the course of eighty five years.[58] The chic ferocity and glamorous distortions have vanished but the figures retain a taut and tense precision. Colour is used with bold

55 . B.K.B. acc no. 449. Pub. In Krishna Anand, op.cit., p. 43.
56 . M.S. Randhawa, *The Krishna Legend* ,(New Delhi), frontice piece, B.K.B. acc. No. 446.
57. B.K.B. acc.no – 9428 Pub in Krishna Anand, op. cit. p. 47.
58. Archer, W.G., *Central Indian Painting,* London, p.11.

invigorating clarity and there is the same reliance on tart simplification especially in the sky, tree and building. The feminine shape no longer conforms to earlier ideals but various details – the low flat domes and arrow – like band – betray the picture's Mandu ancestry. The most arresting likeness, however, is in the towering tree which rears its sharp and stylized shape against a background of impassioned storm. The poet hero is shown kneeling at his mistress's feet, while a tree closely similar in form, occupies the same insistent position. It was in the brilliant simplification of foliage that the Shirazi style of Persian Painting left perhaps its greatest mark on Malwa painting.

The subject of the picture is one of the ladies of Hindola Raga 'the swinging music', tidying her hair with the help of a maid. The great moon-like mirror is perhaps an image for 'the mind's eye', the lady fancying that it is her lover not herself, whom she sees. The fact is that her skin is dark blue shows that in order to maintain his interest, she has resorted to a practice current among Hindu ascetics and has smeared her body with ashes. Asceticism was believed to confer supernormal powers and for this reason was sometimes adopted by ladies anxious to ensure their lovers' return. The choice of red for skirt and bodice, echoed in the red alcove and niches, symbolizes her passionate longing.[59]

The picture shows Balrama, pale skinned and crowned, consorting with the milkmaids after night upon night of ecstatic dancing. Desiring to bath in the river Jamuna, he commands it to alter its course and when the river fails to comply, drags it to him with the aid of his ploughshare. At the top of the picture, the river goddess in green dress, bows before him while, lower, Balarama and the milkmaids plunge and frolic in the water. Despite its later date, the painting possesses the rich and glowing colours of the earlier series while the standard Malwa convention of a single flat plane enables the essentials of a situation to be conveyed with masterly clarity.[60]

An example of the second strand in Malwa painting popularized in the seventeenth century at Narsinghgarh. The subject is once again an illustration to the kind of poem which accompanied and interpreted the thirty six standard modes of music. A passion for Ragini pictures, as they were called, was current from the sixteenth to eighteenth

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59. Mehta, N.C. *Studies in Indian Painting*, pl.1.22.
60. Archer, W.G., op.cit., p. 12, pl. 5.

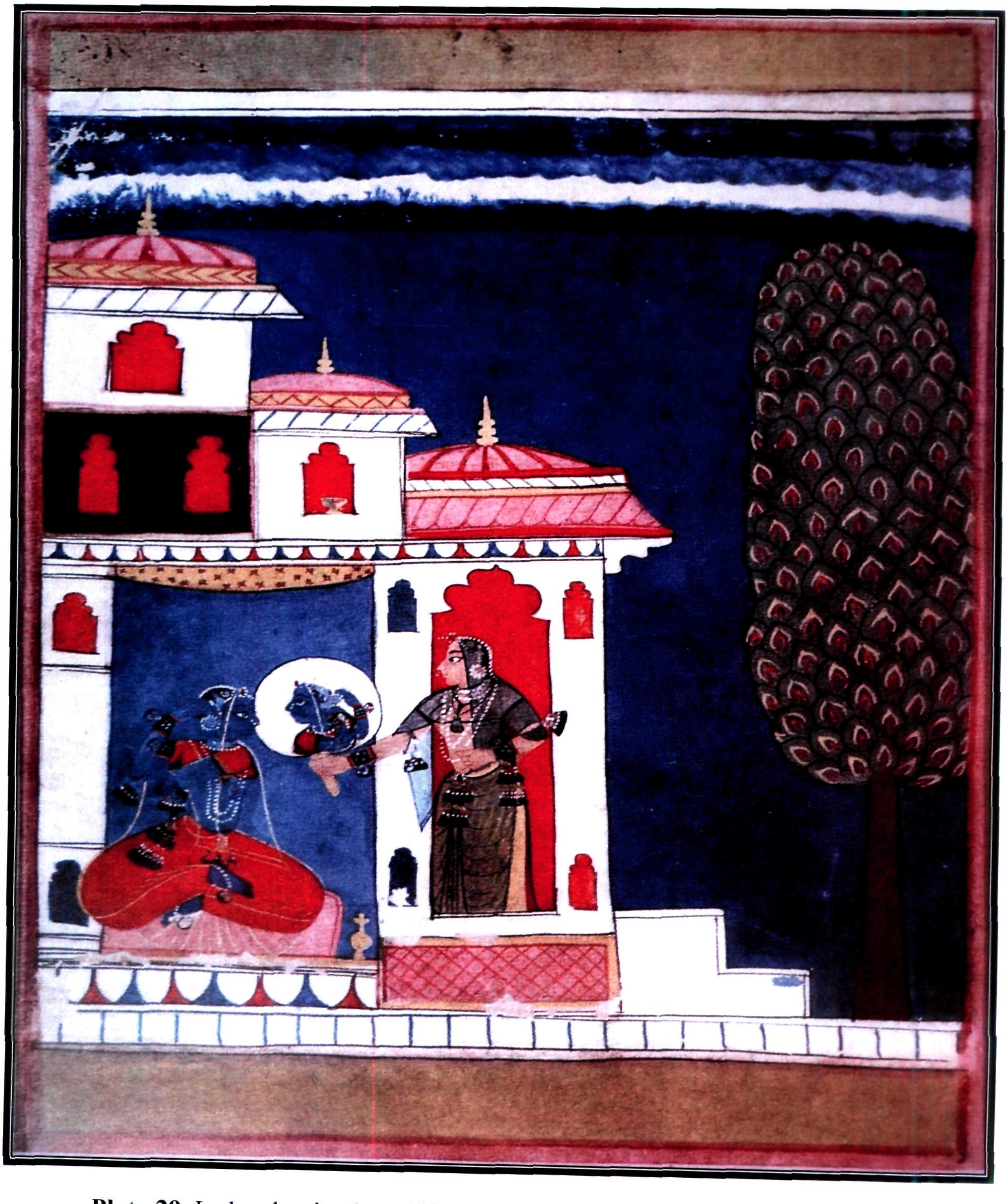


Plate-29 Lady adorning herself in a mirror, illustration to the musical mode, Vivala Ragini, Malwa Central India, c. 1630, British Museum



Plate-30 Balarama bathing with milkmaids, illustration to the tenth book of Bhagavata Purana, Malwa Central India, dated 1688



Plate- 31 Lovers at night, illustration to Indian musical mode, Varari Ragini, Malwa, Central India, c. 1860

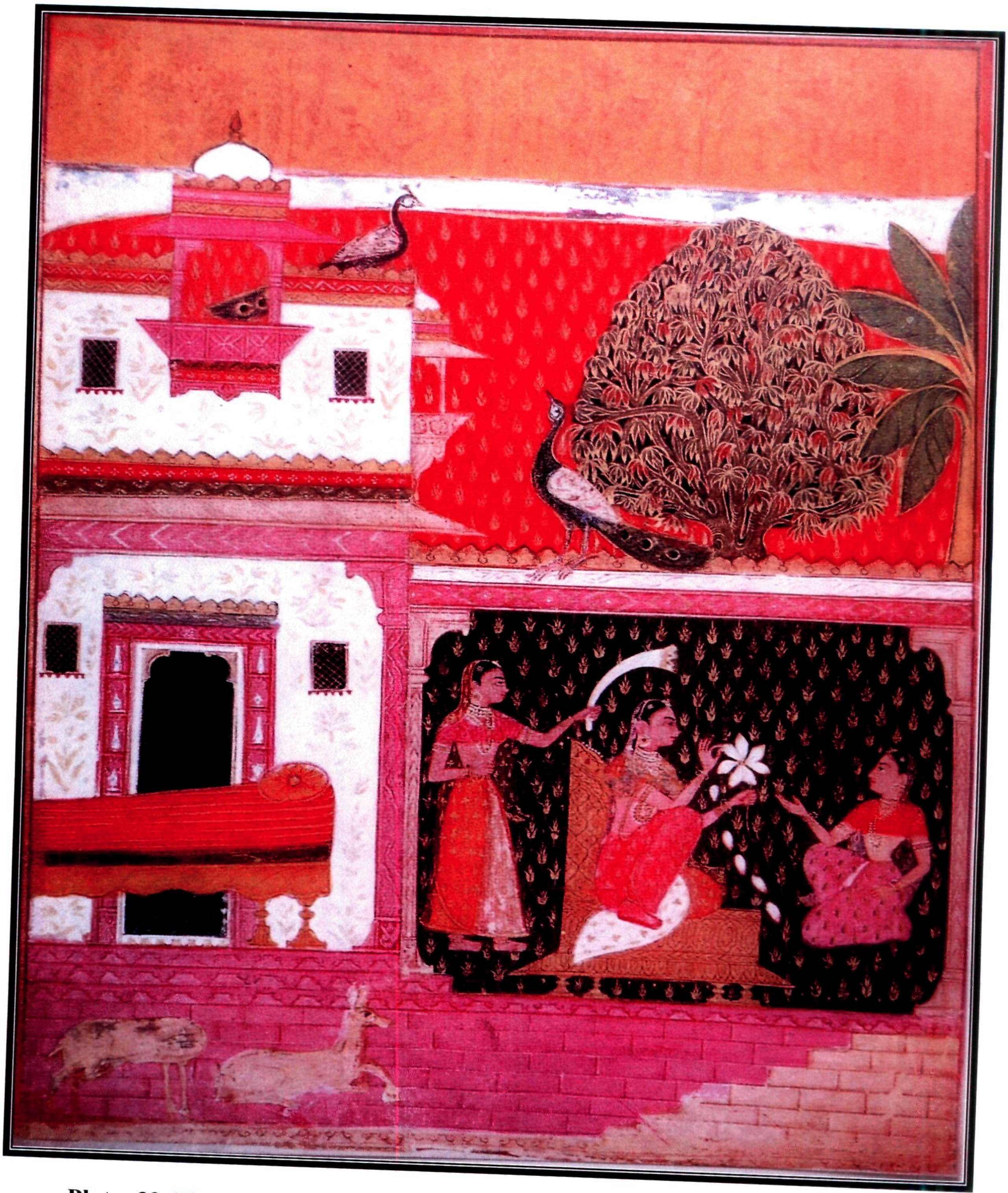


Plate- 32 The Lady and the lotus, Malasri Ragini, Malwa, Central India, c. 1640

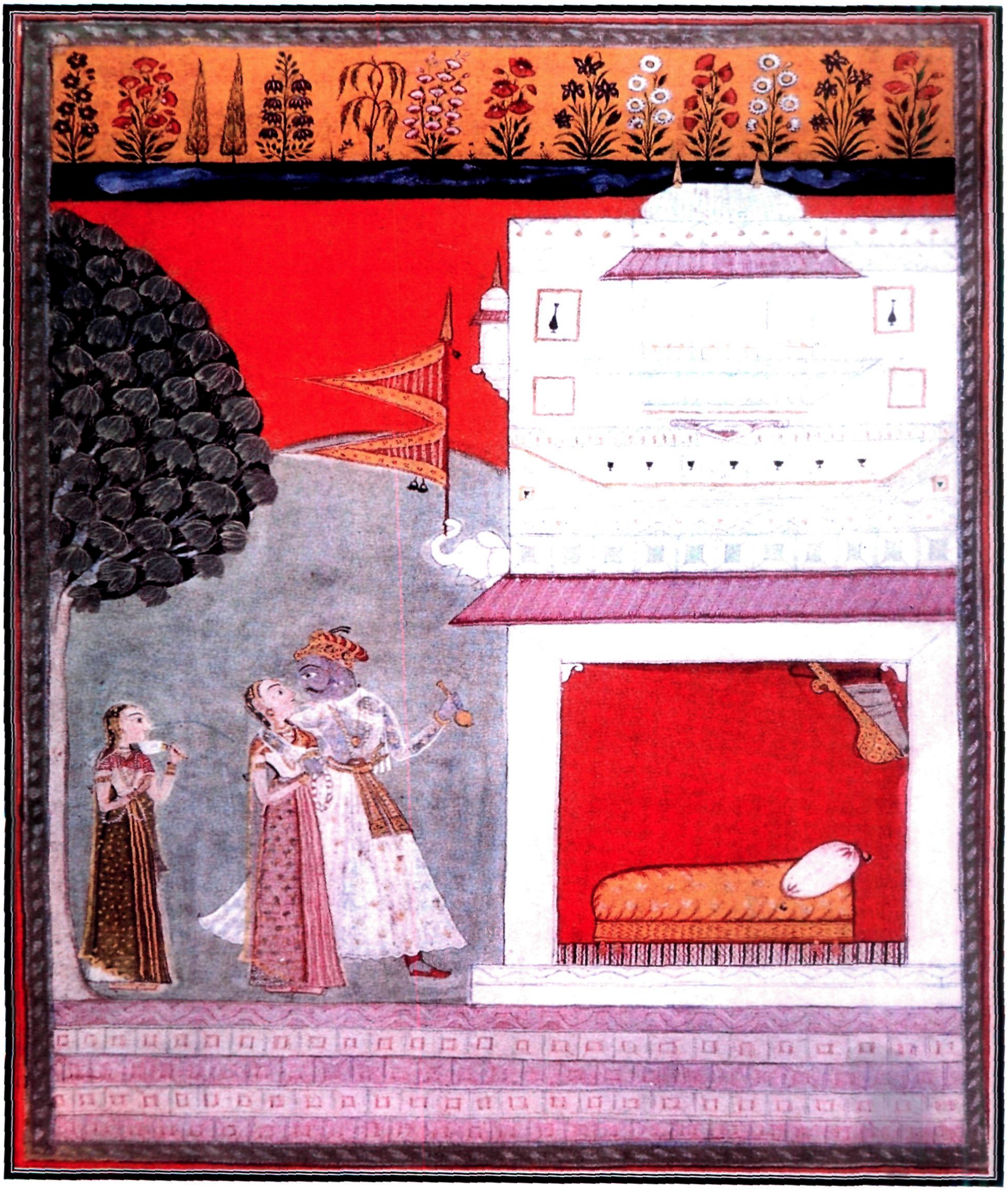


Plate- 33 Lovers approaching a bad chamber, illustration to the Indian Musical made, Malawa Ragini, Malwa, c. 1680

centuries and suggests that central India specialized in music and its poetical interpretation. The present mode is feminine in character, Varari being one of the 'ladies' of the 'musical prince', Dipala Raga, 'the candle music'. For this reason it focuses on the girl's eager adoration, stressing the fact that even when embraced by her lover, she continues to minister to his comfort and fans him with a white hair-plume. They appear in early Indian sculpture and played much the same role in Indian life. In the present picture, the hair-plume gripped by the girl may have the further function of fanning 'the frame of love'.[61]

The picture illustrates one of the 'ladies' of yet another 'musical prince', Malkaus Raga the inclusion of the empty bed, the two peacocks, and tame deer suggesting ardent longing. As she awaits her lover's arrival, she plucks the petals of a lotus, perhaps indulging in an Indian wishing game – 'he loves me, he loves me not' soothing herself by fingering the cool petals or even stroking in imagination the lover's skin.[62]

The present illustration depicts the interdentally slim and elongated women, their eyes thinly scratched. While the pink and mauve steps, the tilted bed, tree and pavilion are closely link to previous painting. In subject, the picture represents another and different 'lady' of the musical prince', Bhairava Raga. She is now a girl strolling with her lover, urging him to delay no longer but to lead her within.[63]

Manuscripts in Persian style arrived, while a few Persian Painters went to India. This manuscript was illustrated by the Persian artist, Haji Mahmud, at the instance of Nasir-ud-din Khalji (1500-1510) of Malwa, displaying in manner a variant of the Persian style of Herat. The present page describes the hopeless endeavors by a youth of Samarkand to win the favors of a heatless beauty. Rebuffed by the girl, he continually renewed his suit, although his companions begged him to ignore her fatal attractions. In the picture, somewhat loosely related to the text, the hopeless youth is seated by his love, learning yet again her stark decision.[64]

In these pictures, Turkman elements can be recognized in the highly formalized vegetation, in small springs of flowers and in the Persian garb warn by some of the

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61. Khandalavala, Karl, *'Leaves from Rajasthan'*, Marg, IV, No.3, Figs. 24 and 25.
62. Archer, W.G. op. cit. p.20, pl.9.
63. Stchoukine, *La Peinture INdienne*, Paris, 1929, pls. 75 and 76.
64. Illustration (folio 95a) to the *Bustan of Sadi.* National Museum, New Delhi.

women other ingredients, however the Sultan with his very distinctive moustache, the women with their Indian earrings, the local vessels are clearly Indian.[65]

The flat red background no longer interprets shameful cravings but in rather a proud assertion of impassioned ecstasy. The lamp flaming over the empty bed parallels the upward movement of the flowering tree and both are symbols of romantic union. The lady stepping lightly on her lover while he gently lifts her foot communicates his attitude of loving adoration – an attitude which found intense expression in Sanskrit poetry and was later to characterize Hindu strands in Indian painting.[66]

This picture reflects a vogue for "musical poetry". Perhaps inaugurated by Baz Bahadur "spirit" of the music is visualized as a lady braving the darkness in order to join her paramour. The peacock is given abrupt discharge and soars into the dark clouds to slake its thirst for rain. Although less brusquely demarcated than in the previous painting, the forms retain much of their angular intensity; the architecture continues to suggest that of Mandu in Central India and the eyes, although less large, are still expressive of ardent resolution.[67]

Besides illustrating love poetry and musical modes, central Indian painting also fulfilled the pious needs of Hindu gentry. The scene depicts Dasaratha, ruler of Ayodhya and father of Rama, seated under the umbrella commonly associated with royalty. A priest is shown smearing his forehead and thereby conveying his blessing. A dancing girl accompanied by musicians contributes to the general felicity, while the red background suggests the excitements of a tense occasion.[68]

In this picture, yet another musical mode is portrayed, the "lady" or "spirit" of the music patiently plaiting a garland of jasmine flowers while a maid fans the hot air. Behind her is a flat expanse of clamorous scarlet, a conventional symbol for ardent wishes. The towering trees, edged with blossoms, are intended to suggest a lonely wood, while the white branches bursting from the leaves may indicate the hurrying lover. Garlands were often used in love-making either as gifts expressing tender

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65. Skelton, Robert, "*The Nimatnama: a landmark in Malwa Painting*", Marg XII-3 (June 1959) 44-50, 14 pls.
66. Illustration to the Sanskrit love poem, the *Charupanchasika* ("Fifty verses of a Thief"), *Collection of the N.C. Mehta*, Bombay. Pub. in Archer, W.G., *Indian Miniature,* New York, 1960, pl. 32.
67. Illustration to the musical mode, Madhu Madhavi Ragini, *Cleveland Museum of Art*(J.H. Wade Collection) Cleveland, Ohio. Pub. In Archer, W.G. op. cit. p. 33.
68. Illustration to the Hindu epic, the Ramayana (for "Annals of Rama"). *W.G. Archer Collection,* London, Pub. In Archer, W.G. op.cit p.34.

admiration, symbols for the final goal or fragrant adornments for the loved one's body.[69]

This is the high watermark of Malwa Painting. On the top of Srikhanda mountain is seen a domed pavilion and monkeys are jumping from one tree to another in the forest, where a lion is also seated. Further down, the Nayika is playing the Asavari Ragini, which is luring the cobras entwining the Sandal wood trees, the bright and blue complexioned damsel is no other than the 'Abhisarika' in her state of *Virpralabadha Sringara.* The flames of passion have turned her complexion to blue. This ragni who appears to have a tribal ancestry is wearing a dress decorated with peacock plums on her skirt, *choli* and hairdo. A midst the surroundings of the forest the picture of Asavari occupies a prominent position. Its lyrical effect is further enhanced by the lured snakes. The inscription on the top fully explains the contents.[70]

69. Illustration to the musical mode, *Sorath Ragini, National Museum,* New Delhi.
70. Khare, M.D. & Khare, D.: *Splendour of Malwa Paintings*, New Delhi, 1983, p.68.

CHAPTER - III

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL MILIEU OF WOMEN DEPICTED IN BOOK ILLUSTRATIONS AND ALBUM PICTURES

Indian paintings like all other fine arts has therefore, always preserved its spiritual unity, the religious instinct, which is its vital force. Jaina and Buddha paintings had been exclusively religious and puritanical. Malwa, Mughal and Rajasthani paintings illustrate different types of themes such as religious, secular and romantic.

As the Indian culture dominated more and more, the Persian elements gradually receded into the background, except for a few conventions which persisted, as seen in the use of the three quarter profile faces or certain types of arabesques etc. probably in the early sixteenth century, this hybrid style was replaced by the newly formed Rajasthani style. Therefore, the origin of Rajasthani style of which "Malwa" represents a sub-style, is to be sought neither in the Apabhramsa nor in the Mughal School, but in the court paintings of the Sultanate period. Mughal manuscript so far known to combine elements of the Tabrizi Safavid style, the traditions of 'Sultanate' painting; but as is shown by reminiscences of it in later painting for Akbar reflects the direction in which the Persian painters were to adapt their own highly idiosyncratic style to Akbar's taste

In the history of Mughal Empire the contribution of women in the field of society is remarkable. These beautiful, educated and talented women contributed towards the social, cultural, literary and artistic fields. Some of them were intensely devoted to religion and literary activities; others devoted their time in music, dancing and fine arts. Many of them went on excursions and pleasure trips but most of them were interested in dresses, toilet and ornaments.[1]

(a) Mughal Miniatures

In addition to the writings of Persian chroniclers and accounts of foreign travelers, Mughal paintings form a very important source for the study of the social and cultural life of Mughal women. Delicate, almond-eyed beauties are depicted bathing, adorning

1. C.M.V. Stuart, *Gardens of the Great Mughals*, London, 1913, p. 220.

themselves, stretching up to gather flowers from the trees, playing the *vina* or *sitar* or dressed in their finery awaiting their lovers.

There are a large number of Mughal paintings which depict that they arranged dinner party, excursion, marriage feasts, picnics, garden parties and drinking drug parties and birthday celebrations. All these celebrations were enjoyed with great pomp and show.

Nur Jahan Begum gave many feasts. She arranged a grand dinner in 1617 A.D., on the occasion of Prince Khurram's victory in the Deccan, which is the most memorable. She arranged a grand banquet and conferred on the prince dresses of honor of great value and other presents. She also gave gifts to his harem ladies, his children and his servants.[2]

Marriages were held in the open space of the gardens. The entire responsibility of arranging the feasts and festivities depended on important royal ladies of the Mughal harem. Marriages were celebrated lavishly. The marriage of Jahangir's son Parwez with the daughter of Murad Bakhsh was held in palace of Mariyam uz Zamani. Jahangir's account of the marriage celebration of his step son prince Shahryar is interesting. He writes that the feast of *Kar-i-khair* (consummation) of marriage, of his son Shahryar (1621) increased the joy of his heart. The *Heena bandi* (putting Heena on hands) assembly took place in the palace of Mariyam-uz-zamani. The feast of Nikah (marriage) was held in the *Nur Afshan* garden. The *heenabandi* ceremony was performed next in which *heena* or *mehandi* was applied on the bridegroom's feet by the harem ladies.[3]

Another grand Mughal royal family marriage was that of Shah Jahan's eldest son Dara Shikoh with Nadira Begum, the daughter of Prince Parvez, another son of Jahangir.[4] Princess Jahan Ara took upon responsibility of this marriage for the successful organization of the feasts and festivities.[5] The *heenabandi* ceremony was performed on the 21st of Shaban, 1042 A.H. (11 February, 1633 A.D.). Shah Jahan gave his consent to the revival of music and dance in the harem which was earlier stopped due to Mumtaz's death. The whole of Agra was illumined with lights and

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2. Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* tr. by A. Rager and H. Beveridge, Calcutta, 1923, pp. 385-386.
3. Lahori, Abdul Hamid, *Badshahnama*, ed. Kabir-ud-din Ahmad and Abdul Rahim, Calcutta, 1867-68, vol. I, Pt. II, pp. 266-68; Vol. II, pp. 137, 305.
4. Lahori, Abdul Hamid, *Badshah Nama*, Vol. I, pp. 452-60.
5. Khan, Inayat, *Shah Jahan Nama*, tr. A.R. Fuller ed. & completed by W.E. Begley, Delhi, 1990, p. 90.



Plate- 34 The Marriage procession of Dara Shikoh, Oudh, Provincial Mughal, c. A.D. 1740



Plate- 35 Babur celebrates in Kabul the birth of Hamayun, Babarnama, British Museum

fireworks. Next day the marriage was performed.[6] Once again soon Jahan Ara Begum played an important role in arranging the marriage of her second brother Prince Shuja with the daughter of Mirza Rustam safawi.[7]

The ladies not only organized feasts but also attended them to which proved to be another source of their entertainment. It appears that sometimes the wives of the nobles also prepared banquets. The wife of Jafar Khan ordered a grand banquet to be organized for Aurangzeb in the year 1665 A.D.[8] Jahan Ara Begum and the members of rest of the royal family and all chaste ladies of the court had stayed there till mid night.[9]

Most of the times a royal lady took upon herself the charge of arranging the marriage feasts like Jahan Ara Begum did in Dara's and Shuja's marriages and also when Dara's daughter Jahanzeb Banu Begum got married to Muhammad Azam son of Aurangzeb.[10] Another of Shah Jahan's daughter Gauhara Begum and a certain Hamida Banu Begum arranged the marriage feast of Zubdat-un-Nisa Begum, a daughter of Aurangzeb to Sipihr Shikoh, Dara's son.[11] Zinat-un-Nisa Begum supervised the marriage celebrations of Muizzuddin to Sayyid-un-Nisa Begum.[12] Moreover, these occasions provided a lot of enjoyment and merrymaking to the harem inmates.

A *Baburnama* painting of Akbar's period depicts that the birth of a son was celebrated with great pomp and show.[13] When Humayun was five or six days old, Babur went out to the char-bagh where the feast of his nativity was organized. All the small *begs* and the great nobles, brought gifts. It was the first rate feast. The whole court rejoiced, when the princes were born. But when the princesses were born, the jubilation was confined to the women of the *Mahal.*[14] When Emperor Akbar ordered rejoicings at the

6. Khan, Inayat, Ibid., p. 91.
7. Ibid., p. 93.
8. Ibid., p. 95.
9. Sulaimani, Hamid, *Miniatures of Babur Nama* folio 1, pub. "Fan" Publishing House of the Uzbeks, SSR.
10. Saqi, Mustaidd Khan, *Ma'asir-i-Alamgiri*, tr. and annotated by Jadunath Sarkar, Royal Asiatic Society, Bengal, Calcutta, 1947, p. 47.
11. ibid. p. 77.
12. Ibid., p. 152.
13. Sulaiman,Hamid, *Miniatures of Babur-Nama,* Samarkand,1969,pl.45.
14. Fazl, Abu'l, *Ain-i-Akbari*, ed. H. Blochmann, vol. III, tr. Jerret & Sarkar, Calcutta, 1948. p.816.

birth of Iffat Banu, a daughter of prince Salim, it was considered, according to Abul Fazl, contrary to the custom of contemporaries.[15]

A painting from Jahangir's period c. 1615-20 shows, there were more or less the routine recreations.[16] The young ladies also enjoyed celebration of births, *Maktab* (initiation of education), aqiqa (tonsure) and marriages. Such occasions were almost numberless in the *large* establishment of the Mughal harem. Both Hindu and Muslim festivals were celebrated. The festival like *id-i-milad* (the feast of the prophet's nativity), *shab-i-barat* (the night of the Prophet's ascent to heaven), *Id-ul-fitr* (the festival of breaking the long fast of Ramzan), *id-ul-zuha* (the festival of sacrifice) and many other minor Muslim festivals to which reference have made both by solemnized with great éclat and some other festivals were also celebrated like *Dasehra, Holi, Rakshabandhan* and *Vasant*. The harem ladies arranged feasts on such occasions and helped in decorating the venue of the celebrations. Illuminations, fireworks, abundant display of gold, silver and pearls, diamonds and jewels were highlights of these festivities. Display of firework was another exciting amusement of Mughal ladies. Their amusement at night was generally to have large torches lighted on which they will spend more than one hundred and fifty thousand rupees.[17]

The monotony of life of the ladies in harem was often broken by the visits of guests and the reception offered to them. The wives of the nobles visited the ladies of the Emperor's household and *vice versa.*[18] They were entertained with sweet drinks (sherbet) and betel leaves which were the favourites of the aristocratic ladies.

There were many other occasions for ladies to celebrate. Akbar used to go boating along with his ladies and enjoyed the spectacle of the variegated spring in various gardens. Jahangir particularly used to pass many days and night in outings and picnics in the company of ladies and children.[19] "The words of king himself", I held meeting in one of the houses of the palace of Nur Jahan Begum (in Malwa), which was situated in the midst of large tanks, and invited the *Amirs* and courtiers in the feast which had been prepared by Nur Jahan Begum. There were all kinds of intoxicating

15 . Fazl, Abu'l, Ibid, vol. I, p. 226.
16 . Beach,M.C., *The New Cambridge History of India Mughal and Rajput Painting,* Cambridge,2002,pl.94
17 . Ibid, 1028, 1049.
18 . Mundy, Peter, *Travels of Peter Mundy in Asia*, ed. R.C. Temple, Hakluyt Society, London 1914, p. 27.
19 . Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, p.109.

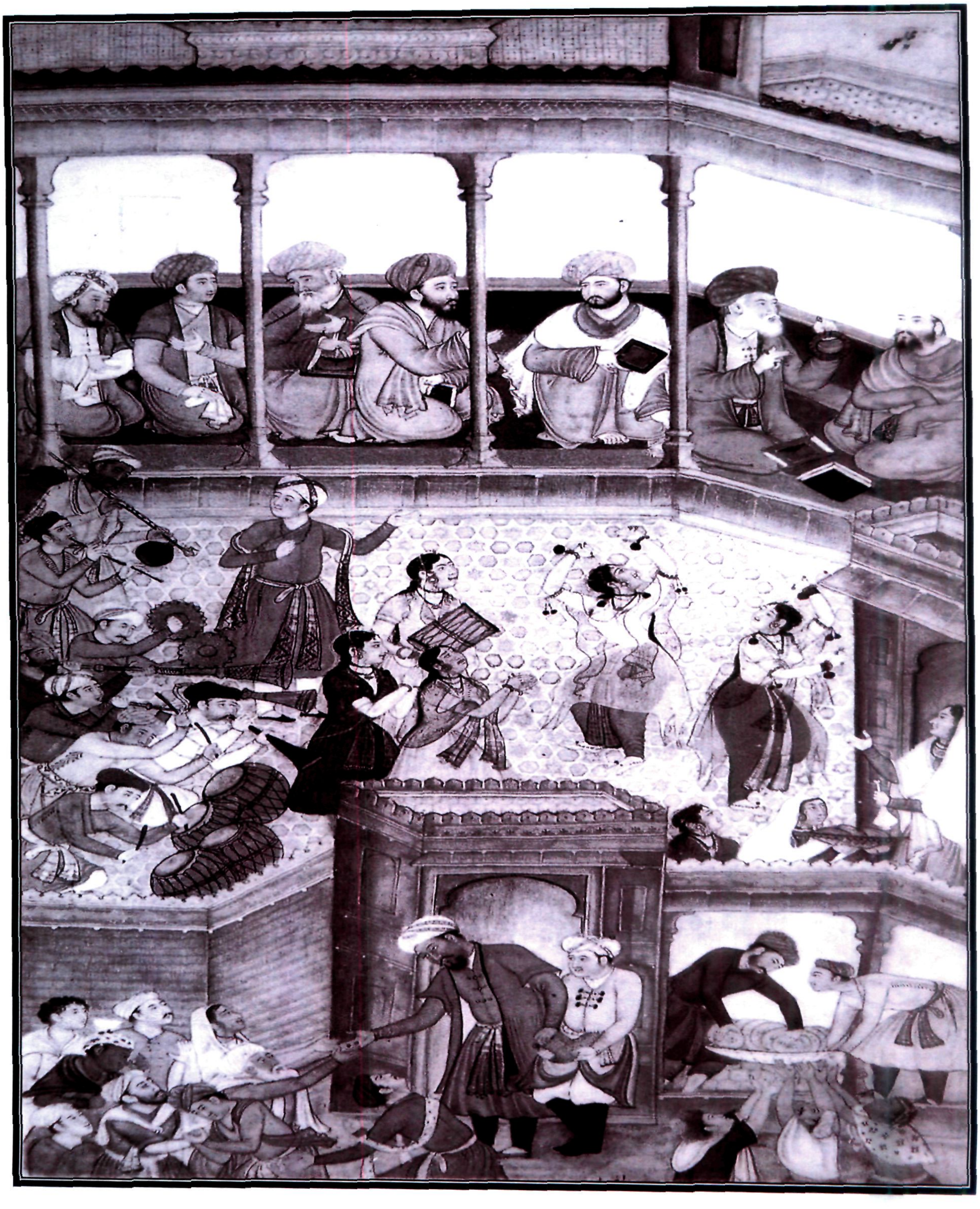


Plate- 36 Celebration of the birth of Salim, attributed to Lal, Akbarnama, c. 1603-05



Plate- 37 Jahangir Celebrates Holi, attributed to Govardhan, c. 1615-20



Plate- 38 Parviz and Women, attributed to Govardhan, c. 1620-25

drinks. In 1621 A.D. Jahangir, along with other ladies, went to the palace of Nur Jahan Begum. In his honor she held a royal entertainment there.[20]

A Mughal painting c. 1620-25 depicts a prince and a woman are enjoying picnic in a forest.[21] Picnics by ladies were occasions when they sought and found pleasure. The ladies of the royal palace passed their time mostly in the *Mahal*. They sought freedom as individuals and as groups. In this context Manucci tells us a very interesting story[22]. In front of the royal palace at Lahore was a garden called *Dil kusha*. Twelve officials were sent out in search of twelve women. One by one eleven appeared, and one man was left without a lady. As the sun was setting, there appeared one at entrance of the garden, who walked most gracefully. She roused envy in the whole company. Drawing near to him to whom she was allotted, who had come forward? She perceived it was her husband.

A Mughal painting c. 1620-25 depicts a prince and a woman is enjoying drinking party in a garden.[23] Sometimes pipes and drinking cups added to their enjoyment and they often had a puff or sip to make them livelier. In the latter half of the seventeenth century smoking (*Hukka*) became very popular. It was also used to entertain guests. Drinking was also very common. Manucci says, "the ladies drank at night when music dancing, acting and other delightful pranks go on around. Women of the seraglio too used to drink wine and took drugs. Manucci writes that the eunuchs searched "everything with great care to stop the entry of *bhang*, wine, opium, nutmegs or other drugs which could intoxicate, for all women in *mahals* love much such beverages.[24] Udepuri, a wife of Dara, became afterwards a loved wife of Aurangzeb. She was used to habitual of drinking spirits, and that more liberally than discretion allows, thus frequently, she was intoxicated.

Learned or *mullas* wanted to make rules against women drinking or eating bhang, nutmeg, opium or other drugs.[25] The ladies of the royal harem did not like it, knowing that the ladies of the Ulema also drank. So, Jahan Ara Begum invited to her palace a

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20. Leach, L.Y., *Mughal and the Other Indian Painting from the Chester beatly library*, London, 1995, pl. 70.
21. Leach, L.Y., Ibid., pl. 58.
23. Manucci, op.cit., vol. II, pp. 350-51.
24. Ibid. p. 139
25. Ibid. p. 139

number of wives of the most eminent ulema.[26] They came dressed in the latest fashion wearing tight fitting trousers and heartily drank the wine offered to them.[27]

Pelsaert found the Mughal women eating during the day, efficacious preserves containing amber, pearls, gold and opium as these elevated the spirit, and at night, drinking wine. He also found the habit of drinking quite fashionable during Jahangir's time.[28] Jahan Ara Begum was very much fond of drinking wine, and Manucci says that she brought them from Persia, Kabul and Kashmir.[29] But the best liquor she drank was made in her own palace from wine and rose water and spiced with aromatic drugs and flowers.[30] Manucci further adds, "Many a time she did me the favour of ordering some bottles of it to be sent to my house, in sign of her gratitude for my curing people in her harem.[31]

It is well known that Mughals participated in various games. These games were not only indoor but also outdoor. The Mughal women were also actively participated in many games. They also took part in hunting and shooting; Abul Fazl's *Ain-i-Akbari* mentions only four indoor games in the following sequence *chaupar, chandal mandal*, cards and chess. There are many Mughal miniatures showing harem ladies playing these games. A painting from *Razmnama* depicts the game of *Chaupar* one lady in standing near it.[32] It is also well known that Zebunnisa spent much time playing *chaupar* with her girl friends. These games were freely played in the Mughal harem.

Akbar invented *Chandal Mandal*, this game, sixteen players could be played at a time. It could be played in twelve different ways as described in *Ain-i-Akbari*.[33] The figure of game was drawn on a board. It was consisted sixteen parallelograms arranged in a circular form around a row. The number of pieces was sixty four, dices were used, of which the four longer sides were marked with one, two, ten and twelve points respectively. The number of players was sixteen but the game might be played by

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26 . Bihari Satsai, *Dohas* 358, 359, 360, 361, pp. 127-28.
27 . Das, A.K., *Paintings of the Razmnamah, The Book of War*,Mapin, 2005, pl. 56.
28 . Pelsaert, Francisco, *Jahangir's India*, trs. from Remonstrantie in Dutch by W.H. Moreland and P. Geyl, Cambridge, 1925, p. 65.
29 . Manucci, op.cit., vol. II, p. 211.
30 . Ibid., p. 211.
31 . Ibid., p. 211.
32 . Fazl Abul, Ibid., vol. I, p. 317.
33 . Ibid., p. 318.



Plate- 39 Chand Bibi playing Chaugan or Polo, Decca, Golkonda, Late 17th Century, National Museum, New Delhi

fifteen or even less players the figure being lessened accordingly. Each player got four pieces, which were placed in the middle. Abul Fazl describes the technique of playing this game. Thus in a *Chaupar*, the pieces were moved to the right, and passed through, the whole circle. The player who was out first was entitled to receive the stipulated amount from the other fifteen players, the second that was out. from fourteen players, as so on. The first player, therefore, won most, and the last lost most, the other players both lost and won.[34]

Chaupar was another popular game among ladies of Mughal harem. There are many paintings of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, which can be better described as 'Indian' then as Rajputs or Mughal. One plate of '*pachisi players*' is a beautiful example; though it loses very much in reproduction. The situation is typical. a marble terrace where two girls are seated, resting on cushions. They are playing *pachisi* or *chaupar* flowers growing in a formal garden are visible beyond the low wall of the terrace.[35]

Abul Fazl refers about the technique of *chaupar* game.[36] It is played with sixteen pieces of the same shapes, but every four of them must have the same. The pieces all move in the same direction. The players used three dice.[37] Four of the six sides of each dice are greater than the remaining two; the four long sides being marked with one, two, five and six dots respectively. The players draw two sets of two parallel lines are of equal length.[38] The small square which is formed by the intersection of the two sets in the center of the figure is left as it is, but the four rectangles adjoining the sides of the square are each divided into twenty four equal spaces.[39] This game was generally played, as it is even today, by four players in teams of two each. The game of *chaupar* was especially popular among the Hindus particularly among the Rajputs.[40]

Formerly many grandees took part in this game, there were often as many as two hundred players and no one was allowed to go home before they finished sixteen

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34 . Coomarswamy, A.K., *Selected Examples of Indian Art*, Board, Campden, 1910, p. 5.
35 . Fazl, Abul, op.cit., vol. I, p. 315.
36 . Ibid., p. 315.
37 . Ibid., p. 315.
38 . Ibid., p. 315.
39 . Ibid., p. 316.
40 . Godden, R., *Gulbadan*, New York, 1981, p. 110.

games, which in some cases lasted three months. If any of them lost his patience and got restless, he had to drink a cup of wine.[41]

In the harem women played hide and seek game. Gulbadan refers that Akbar used to play hide and seek with his ladies. Paintings also show that this game was popular among ladies. Sometimes these games were full of adventures.[42]

The Mughal ladies also played *chaugan* or polo. It was not as popular as other games. The game itself was played in two ways.[43] The first way was to get hold of the ball with the crooked end of the *chaugan* stick and to move it slowly from the middle to the *hal* (the pillars, which mark the end of the playground). The other way consisted in taking deliberate aim, and forcibly hitting the ball with the *chaugan* stick out of the middle, the player then gallops after it, quicker than the other, and throw the ball back.[44] The players' won from each other, and he who brought the ball to the *hal* win most. It was also played in dark nights.[45] For the sake of adding splendor to the games which is necessary in worldly matters, gold and silver fixed to the tops of the *chaugan* sticks.[46]

Women were actively participated in the hunting. It is well known that to the Mughals chase and hunt were pastime. Jahangir went on hunting excursions with his ladies and stayed in camp often for two to three months. Nur jahan was a keen hunter and shot tigers on top of an elephant on one occasion using only six bullets to kill four tigers.[47] Jahangir in his *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* remarks about hunting by Nur Jahan, he also refers that on one occasion, he hunted red deer his sisters and other ladies were with him. As on one occasion Jahangir had vowed that he would not injure any living thing with his hand. He told Nur Jahan to shot at tiger. Nur Jahan hit the tiger with one shot at tiger. Nur Jahan hit the tiger with one shot that it was immediately killed. A Mughal painting depicting deer while hunting by night is another characteristic example in which the artist is more engrossed with the beauty of the night then with the action of the figures.[48] It probably illustrates the story of Rama and Sita's exile in the forest by

41 . Fazl, Abul, op.cit., vol. I, p. 309.
42 . Ibid., p. 309.
43 . Ibid., p. 309.
44 . Ibid., p. 309.
45 . Gascaigne, *The Great Mughals*, New Delhi, 1971, p. 136.
46 . Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, p. 348.
47 . Ibid., p. 130.
48 . Havell,E.B. ,*Indian Sculpture and Painting*,London,1908, p. 228.



Plate- 40 Laila and Majnun at School, by Dharam Das; from a Khamsa of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi Manuscript, Mughal dated 1597-98, Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore

banks of the Godavari. The hunters are scantily dressed like forest hermits.[49] The woman, concealed behind a bush, holds a lantern and tinkles a small bell to attract herd of deer.[50]

In a male dominated medieval society, female education was not given importance. In medieval India female education was not encouraged. It was a privilege confined to the ladies of aristocratic and royal families alone. Even then very few women got higher education and in most cases the education was limited to the primary level alone. Several social factors like *parda* system, child marriage and low position that women generally occupied, played a great role in the low level of education among women.[51]

According to Father Monserrate, Akbar was greatly interested in female education and according to Abdul Qadir Badaoni, the emperor recommended a new syllabus. "He gives very great care and attention to the education of the princesses", writes Monserrate, "they are taught to read and write and trained in other ways by matrons.[52] Akbar established a school for girls in Fatehpur Sikri.[53] Some royal ladies also were interested in promoting the cause of education. They established *madrasas* and gave stipends. Bega Begum, Humayun's consort, founded a college near the mausoleum of her husband.[54] Maham Anga, the foster-mother of Akbar, established a school at Delhi, which was attached to the Khair-ul-Manzil Maszid.[55] Thus the king and many ladies of the harem spent lot of money on the promotion of education.

Parda was also an impediment to the education of princesses.[56] Despite these drawbacks, some princesses exhibited special interest in acquiring 'higher' learning. Their number was small, but in any society in the Middle Ages, learned ladies were but few.

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49. De Laet, Joannes, *The Empire of the Great Mogal*, tr. Hoyland and Banerjee, p. 80, Bombay, 1928.
50. Manucci, op. cit.,vol. I, p. 62.
51. Mukherjee, Soma, *Royal Mughal Ladies and their Contribution*, New Delhi, 2001, p. 166.
52. Monserrate, Commentarius, p. 203, Badaoni, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, vol. II, Calcutta, 1898, pp. 306-07.
53. Law, N.M., *Promotion of Learning in India under Muslim Rule*, p. 203; Jafar, S.M., *Education in Muslim*, India, p. 190.
54. Banerjee, *Humayun Badshah*, vol. II, Oxford, 1938, p. 317.
55. Fazl Abul, *Akbarnama*, vol. II, p. 313; Badaoni, op.cit., vol. II, p. 62.
56. Sharif, Jafar, *Qanun-i-Islam*, trs. by G.A. Herklots as Islam in India, ed. William Crooke, London, 1975, pp. 283-84.

The Mughal women have been busy in their literary pursuit's right from the days of Babur. Both Babur's mother Qutluq Nigar Khanum, and his maternal grandmother Aisan-daulat were educated ladies. One of the Babur's daughters, Gulruk Begum, seems to have composed a number of verses.[57] Some of Babur's many wives were also educated and cultured ladies.

Gulbadan inherited her father's literary taste and intellect. She was an educated woman and had good knowledge of both the Persian and Turkish languages. She wrote the famous historical work Humayun Nama at the request of her nephew, Emperor Akbar.[58] Gulbadan Begum was a woman of considerable poetic talent and is said to have composed many beautiful verses.[59] But her verses no longer exist as they have not been preserved. Just two lines of hers have been preserved by Mir Mahdi Shirazi in his *Tazkirat-ul-Khwatin* –

> "A beauty that is unfaithful to the lover
>
> Believe me, she will find life untrue of her"[60]

During the time of Akbar too we come across educated ladies in the royal Mughal. Akbar's mother Hamida Banu Begum was an educated woman. Akbar's Nurse Maham Anga was also educationally inclined and was a patron of education. Salima Sultan Begum was a woman of intelligence and literary accomplishments. She had good knowledge of the Persian language and came to be known as a poetess.[61] Salima Begum wrote her verses in Persian under the pen name of *Mukhfi*[62] (the concealed or hidden one). One of her popular verses ran thus –

> "In my passion I called Thy, lock the thread of life.
>
> I was wild and so uttered such an expression."[63]

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57. Mishra, Rekha, *Women in Mughal India*, Delhi, 1967, p. 88.
58. Gulbadan Begum, *Humayun Nama* tr. as the History of Humayun by Annette S. Beveridge, Royal Asiatic Society, London, 1902, p. 76.
59. Gulbadan Begum, op. cit., p. 76.
60. Gulbadan Begum, op.cit. (tr.) p. 76; (verse quoted from *Tazkirat-ul-Khwatin*, Eng. tr. in P.N. Chopra, *Life and Letters under the Mughals*, p. 322).
61. Gulbadan Begum, *Humayun Nama* (tr.), p. 58.
62. Gulbadan Begum, op.cit. (tr.), p. 279; Fazl, Abul, *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. I (tr.) p. 322.
63. Khan, Shah Nawaz, *Maathir-ul Ummara*, tr. H. Beveridge, Calcutta, Bibliotheca Indica, 1911,p.14.

As in most other fields, Nur Jahan Begum, the highly cultured, educated, accomplished and exceedingly beautiful wife of Jahangir, was a lady of literary excellence.

Princess Zaib-un-Nisa was the most accomplished and her academic achievements show how a talented princess received her education in the Mughal harem. She was taught by Hafiza Mariyam and Mulla Said Ashraf Mazindarani, a highly educated lady and a great Persian poet respectively. Shah Rustam Ghazi, a renowned scholar, too helped her in her literary pursuits. She was a poetess[64], a proficient mathematician[65] and had learnt the Quran by heart for which she was rewarded thirty thousand gold pieces by her father.[66] But her major interest was poetry. Among the peots of her circle were Nazir Ali Saib, Shams Waliullah, Chandrabhan Brahman and Bahroz.[67] Zaib-ul-Munshat is a collection of her letters, reflecting her extremely refined literary accomplishments in the epistolary art.[68] She was also skilled in the art of calligraphy and could write in *Shikast* (cursive), *nastaliq* and *naskh* styles.[69] But such talented princesses were not many and their accomplishments too were not fully recognized. Gulbadan Begum's *Humayun Nama* is not considered to be a great literary achievement.[70] Poetesses like Gulbadan Begum, and her sister Gulrukh Begum, Sultan Salima Begum, Nurjahan Begum and Jahan Ara Begum are not considered equal to their male counterparts.

The Muslim women observed *parda* with greater rigidity than the Hindu ones. The Muslim women do not come out in to public unless they are poor or immodest. Pelsaert refers that parda was more strictly observed among the Muslims than among the Hindus.[71] With the advent of Turks in India the Hindu women also adopted it as a protective measure to save their honour, at the hands of the foreign invaders. On account of the strict *parda*, they spent their leisure mostly in gardens. Men were not allowed in these gardens on the occasion of the royal visit and strict *parda* was

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64 . Ahmed, H.S., *Zebunnisa Begum and Diwan-i-Makhft*, Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, 1927, p. 42.
65 . Magan Lal and Westbrook, J.D., *Diwan of Zaib-un-nisa*, p. 8.
66 . Sarkar, *Studies in Mughal India*, p. 79.
67 . Zaib-un-nisa, *The Diwan of Zaib-un-nisa*, rendered from the Persian by Magan Lal and Jessie Duncan Westbrook, Wisdom of East Series, John Murray, London, 1913, p. 9.
68 . Ahmed, H.S., op.cit., p. 42.
69 . Mustaid Khan, Saqi, *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, trs. and annotated by Jadunath Sarkar, Royal Asiatic Society, Bengal, Calcutta, 1947, p. 322.
70 . Gulbadan Begum, op.cit., p. 42.
71 . Pelsaert, F., *Jahangir's India*, Cambridge, 1925, p. 66.

observed.[72] Pelsaert describes about the lovelorn life of the wives of Mughal nobility living in strict *parda* and says, "the ladies of our country should be able to realize from this description the good fortune of their birth, and the extent of their freedom when compared with the position of ladies like them in other hand.[73] Sir W. Foster writes that no men could enter in the harem only eunuchs came within the lodging.[74]

A painting probably of Jodha Bai[75] preserved in B.K.B. depicts that a woman is sitting on a horse covered her face with veil. There are also two covered palkis. It is true that queens, concubines and princesses in particular and other ladies in general, observed *parda* from outside. But inside the harem, they moved about freely and came in daily contact with hundreds of persons who could convey to the people outside all that went on in the harem. As a queen Nur Jahan did not observe *parda.* On many occasions Rajput queens did not observe *parda* even in the Mughal harem.[76] It is well known that Mughal women played polo, enjoyed horse riding and hunting. These acts would not have been possible with their covered face. Female painters might have executed some paintings of ladies of the harem who observed strict *parda.* Among the Hindus there was no *parda,* and the artists who saw Hindu beauties freely.[77]

Paintings depicted strict *parda* for the harem women. As there were no doors or windows to the halls, warmth and privacy were secured by means of thick-wadded curtains, called *parda* made to fit each opening between the pillars. On account of the strict *parda,* they spent their leisure mostly in gardens and on marble terraces. In contemporary paintings they are represented sitting.[78] Princesses were taught to live in *parda. Parda* meant living in seclusion or behind a screen or at least covering of the face by a veil. Akbar used a very interesting word for burqa, *chitragupita.*[79] When she grew old, there was no need to continue *parda,* but by that time it had become a habit. *Parda* was not necessary in the harem. The harem was a secluded place, inhabited by

72 . Sir W. Foster, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe(1583-1619),* London, 1921, p. 85.
73 . James Todd, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan,*Rajasthan, 1920, p. 87.
74 . Randhava, M.S., *Indian Miniature Painting,* New Delhi, 1981, pl. 4; Mutamid Khan, *Iqbalnama-i-Jahangiri* in Elliot and Dowson, vol. VI, p. 405.
75 . Schmitz,B.&Desai,Z.A. ‚*Mughal and Paintings & Illustrated Manuscripts in the Persian Raza library,*Rampur,2006, pl.44.
76 . Jahangir, op.cit., p. 351.
77 . Lal, K.S., *Mughal harem,* p. 115.
78 . Fazl, Abul, op.cit., vol. I, p. 347.
79 . Budaoni, *Muntakhab-ut Tawarikh* ed. A. Ali and G. Ranking, tr. Col. George S.A. Ranking, A.S.B. Vol. II, pp. 404, 406.



Plate- 41 The young Akbar pays respect to his mother who rides in a litter; from Akbarnama, Mughal 1590s, Raza library, Rampur

women only.[80] *Parda* in its elaborate and known form is a Muslim institution[81]. The Mughal harem observed it scrupulously. Kashmiri women were employed to stand at the door of Mahal their duty was to carry away and bring back anything that was necessary. They kept themselves unveiled. Princesses and the prominent ladies of the seraglio had different types of conveyances for traveling such as elephants, camels, carts and other conveyances. *Parda* was observed throughout.[82] Mughal paintings had drawn pictures of various covered conveyances like elephant, chaudoul's camel (box like structure carried on camel) litters and palkis. Artists Abul Hasan has left paintings of these in colour.[83] Palanquin was used by well to do ladies. These appear to be completely covered from all sides. However, there was provision for ventilation.[84] It was carried on shoulders by eight men. It was covered with red serge and in case of a rich lady, with velvet. Some ladies traveled in *chaudoulis*. It was a little box like structure carried by two *kahars* (bearers). It was painted and covered with silk net fringes and tassels.[85]

The paintings of Mughal period depict that harem was a big place. The ladies of royalty were confined to the harem. Large number of women was appointed to work as superintendent or supervisor of the harem. The women of harem celebrated festivals with great pomp and show. These women arranged parties on various occasions i.e. birthday, marriage, picnic etc.

The ladies of royal harem did not have any work to do. Therefore, they participated in many games. These games were not only indoor but also outdoor. These women played various games such as hide and seek, playing polo, *chaupar, chandal mandal* and hunting etc.

From the study of painting, we can find that woman of royal harem observed *parda* on public places. But inside the harem, they moved freely. The common women did not observe *parda.* They did outdoor works like construction of building, fetching water and washing clothes etc.

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80 . Manucci, op.cit., vol. II, p. 352.
81 . Ibid., p. 334.
82 . Manucci, op.cit., vol. II, pp. 72-73, Bernier, op.cit. p. 374, Mundy, P., *Travels of Peter Mundy in India* (1608-67) ed. R.C. Temple, vol. II, p. 191.
83 . Bernier, op.cit., p. 371.
84 . Peter Mundy, op.cit., vol. II, p. 190.
85 . Ibid., p. 191.

Mughal Paintings are, in a sense, mostly court painting. The Mughal artist, unlike the contemporary chroniclers, mainly concerned himself with king and the nobles It was again the outward splendor of the luxurious life of this aristocratic stratum of society that interested him. The leading hate in these scenes was again that of leisure and luxury in the life of the middle and lower classes. The artist was almost entirely disinterested apparently, the middle class and the lower did not even by virtue of their numerical strength, exercise any influence in society and were therefore ignored by the artist as well as by the chronicle. It is true that the experience gained from these painting remain for the most part limited to the life at court.

(b) Rajasthani and Pahari Miniatures

The miniature painting schools of Rajasthan flourished from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Every painting is the visual equivalent of poetry and music, an expression of the artist's inner self, his feelings, his admiration for natural beauty, his most secret dreams and highest aspirations.[86] The portraits and other palettes dealing with some important events can be termed as an important source of the social history. A large inscription in the back side of the above painting gives manifold details about the social system then prevalent in the higher Rajput classes. The field of paintings is very vast. They supply ample material for socio-economic studies also.

It is in this sense that the paintings furnish a rich data useful for a social historian about dress, fashions, religion, climate, cultural trends, ideals of beauty, pleasure etc. of an age in which painting is drawn.[87] Rajasthan school had its accredited painters, just as it had its poets and troubadours. So we find as many distinct and characteristic styles as there were royal and princely capitals such as Mewar, Bundi, Kotah, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Jaipur, Kishangarh and Alwar schools.

Literary and visual both sources depicts popularity of music and dance in the land of Rajasthan. Paintings from Jodhpur, Bundi Mewar and Chawand are related to music and amusement. During the eighteenth century, Bundi painting acquired a coarse insensitive vigor, the first picture being a version of the same subject. The swirling clouds, restless lightening and soaring cranes are superficially more naturalistic while the girl attendants prance and caper to a bounding rhythm. As in much earlier

86 . Brunel, Francis: *Rajasthan*, New Delhi, 1980, p. ii.
87 . Pande, Ram : *Painting as a source of Rajasthan History*, Jaipur, 1985, p. 61.

painting, faces tend to conform to a single fixed type one girl being hardly distinguishable from another. The former lush delicacy, however, is wanting and although the picture generates a sense of dancing joy, the sensitive exploration of feminine bodies has been abandoned. The same indifference to subtleties of form appears in the second plate. The lover is scaling a wall, his eyes intent upon his eager mistress. Palace guards seem blandly unaware of what is happening and even the watch-dog gazes with silent interest. The style, however, is harsh and awkward and although the scene itself is full of symbols, the actual execution belies romantic fervor.[88]

Rajasthan is famous for its most celebrated *ghoomar* dance. It is performed only by women. The dance is dedicated to the goddess of Parvati. The women form a circle and do rapid turning movements. Sometimes they also hold small wooden rods in their hands and strike them as they dance. The characteristic movement of the *ghoomar* is the spinning round of the dancers; and it is after this movement that the dance is named.[89] The beauty and the grace of this dance were enhanced by the gorgeous *ghagras* of the dancers. The geer dance is in sharp contrast to the *ghoomar* for it is a dance with a fast tempo and elaborate instrumental accompaniments. This dance is an expression of the natural gaiety of the people of Rajasthan during festivals, like Holi. The dance is performed with beautifully coloured sticks, with tiny bells attach to them.[90]

Another dance bringing out the artistry of Rajasthani dancing and singing is Panihari. This dance represents the graceful movements of the girls going to fetch water from the well. The women dance with earthen pitcher adroitly balanced on their heads. The dance involves very intricate bends and twists.[91]

Rajasthan has a number of famous songs. Certain songs are sung at the time of the dance. There are a few songs which are perennial source of pleasure. There are however, certain 'ragas' and other songs which do not belong to any particular dance. Many of the devotional books of the Hindus, including the Gita-Govinda of Jayadeva, Bhagavata Purana and Raga Raginis came to be illustrated. These constitute the main

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88. Illustration to the music mode, Megh Mallar Raga Rajasthan (Bundi, c. 1780), National Museum, New Delhi.
89. Pal, Dharam, *Rajasthan*, New Delhi, 1968, p. 92.
90. Ibid., pp. 92-93.
91. Ibid., p. 93.

content of 17th century Mewar painting. A typical mature painting of Mewar is the *Ragini vasanta* 1650 A.D.[92]. The vivid lacquer red background presents the blue bodied Krishna in dancing pose, even as he plays on the flute, while two Gopis play the drum and cymbals respectively and one girl shoots colour. The peacocks and the birds are excited by the magic flute. The trees and foliage awaken from their brooding calm and come alive with the shooting foliage and yellow and red fruit. The earth throbs. The sky is shot through with a white tremor under the blue empyrean. The composition creates the drama of the music of bursting life in the spring. All the elements of Chawand are now intensified with great skill. The rich contrasting early colours of Mewar, crimson, vermilion, yellow, black, white and blue remain. The themes are mostly from Hindu religious poetry[93].

This version of the *Madhumadhavi Ragini* makes three dimensional organizations in the plane its main concern. The slanted parapet of the top floor of the building and the fence at the back set the scene for the tilt of the *ragini*'s figure and for her peacock. The other women are impassive figures who mediate between the pillars and the space of the *ragini's* performance. The flight of white cranes on top at the far end of the courtyard delimits the wider ambience of the scene. The pavilion on the top floor firms the structure of the painting. The angular view of the building is a powerful, three dimensional theme that carries the mood of expectation expressed by the movement of the melody of the *ragini*. The colour of the painting is pallid, or bleached.[94]

Hindola Raga, the "swing" melody, is in the light vein of love's foreplay. The *raga*, shown here as a young prince, has many women and is faithful to none. *Hindola raga* became associated with the cult of Krishna.[95] Although this and the preceding painting belong to the same *raga* series, its saturated colour is its main asset, particularly in the contrast of the sultry sky and the glowing red swing. The painter, however, had difficulties with the scaffold supporting the swing and the group of women beside it, on the right. Birds, clouds, and lightening swing are along with the melodic theme.

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92 . Anand, Mulk Raj : *Album of Indian Paintings*, Delhi, 1973, p. 115.
93 . National Museum of India, c. 1650 A.D. Ragini Vasant, *Symbolising love, rendered in Mewar hot colours, with definite Mughal influence.*
94 . Kramrisch Stella: *Painted Delight*, Philadelphia, 1986, pp. 171-172.
95 . Dahmen, *Dallapiccola*, 1975, p. 185.



Plate- 42 Madhumathavi Ragini, Mewar School, Rajasthan, c. 1750

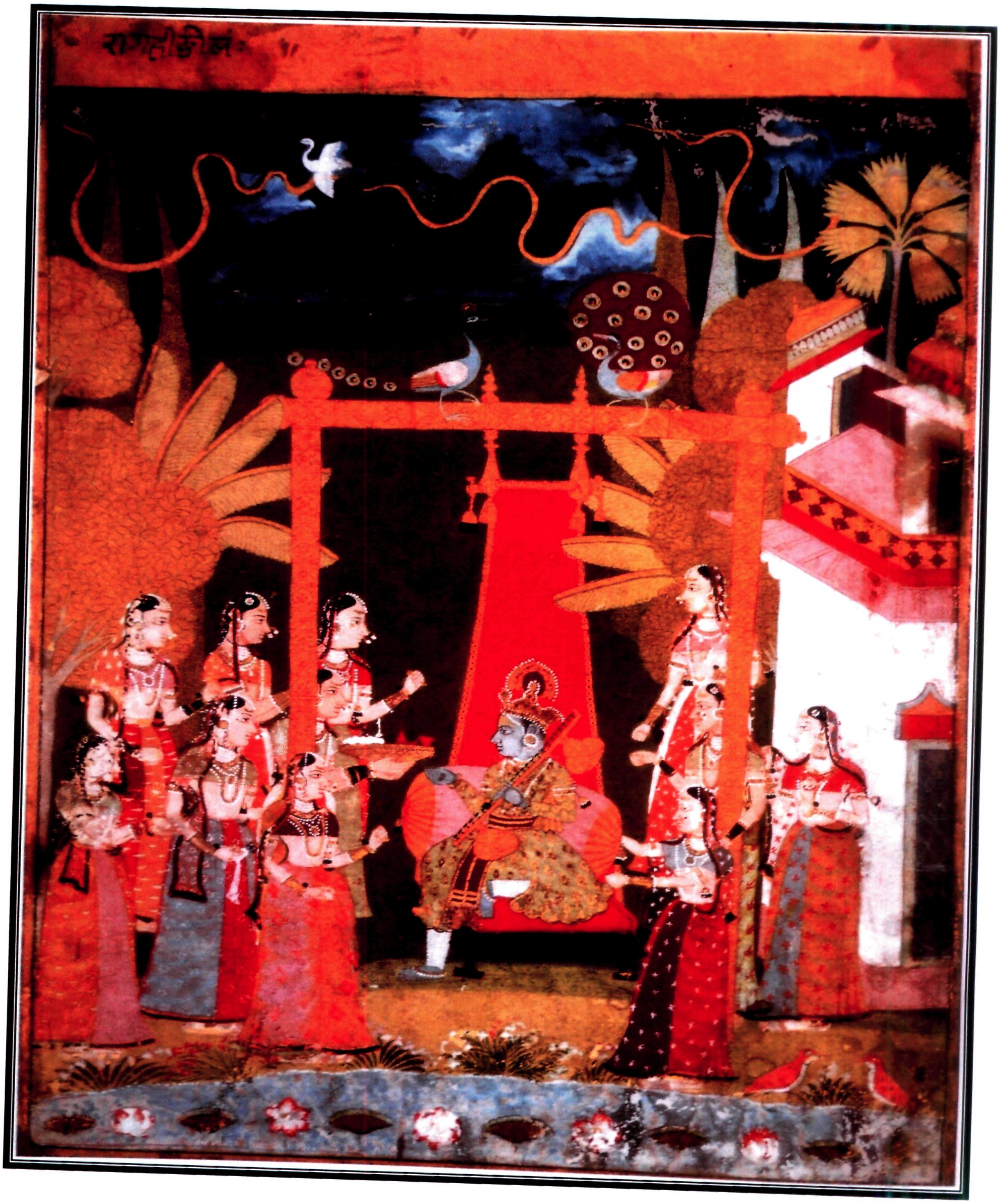


Plate- 43 Hindola Raga, Mewar School, Rajasthan, c. 1750

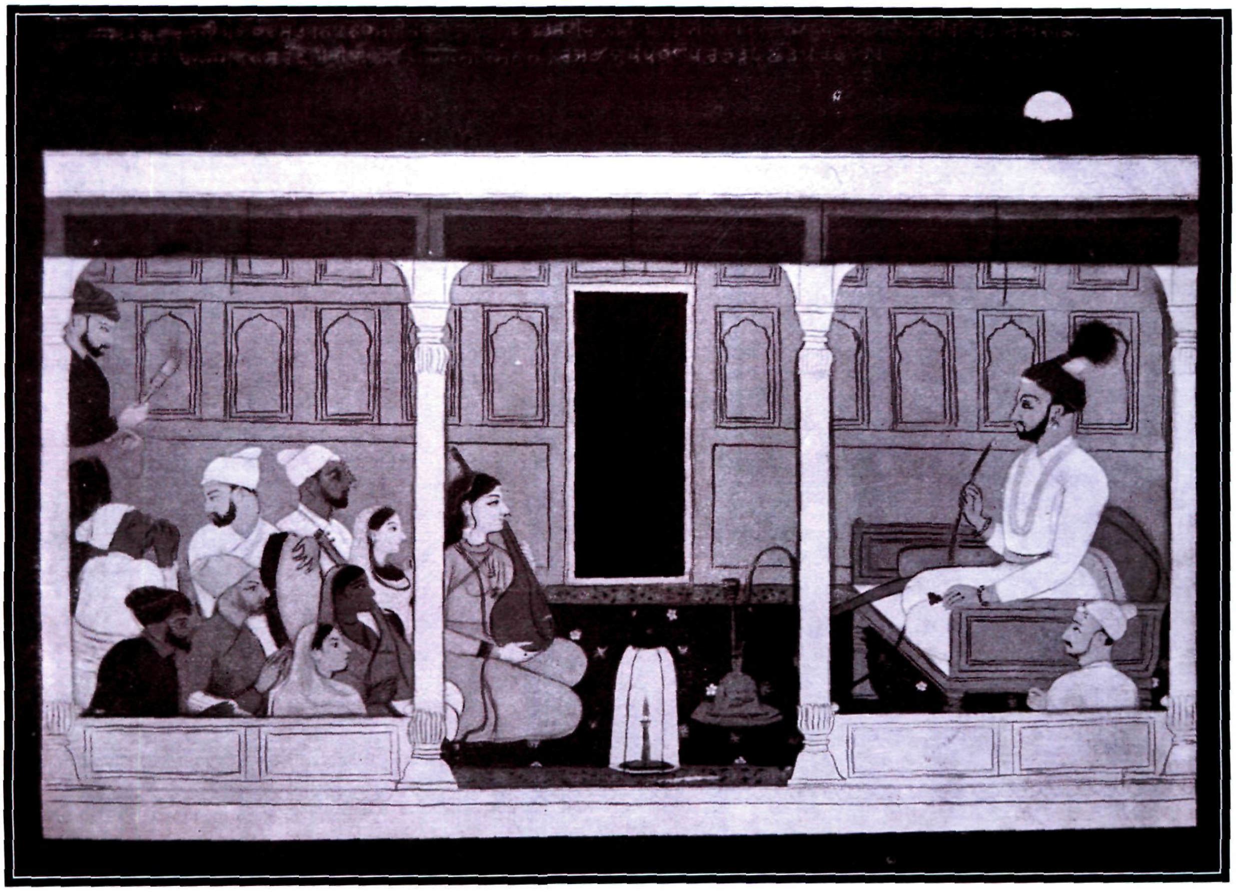


Plate- 44 Raja Balwan Singh of Jammu listening to Musicians at Jasrora painted by Nainsukh, Jammu

The illustration to the Sanskrit poem, the *Gita Govinda* obviously derives from the great Mandu style such as the rolling rim of sky, the sharp treatment of costume, the flat schematic background, the mass of foliage and stem like tree recalling Mandu conventions.[96] A new luxuriance however is present and urban sophistication formerly expressed in geometric architecture has given way to rural order.

Krishna, grabbed like a prince, advances on his chief cowgirl love, the waiting Radha, thus bringing to a close their sad estrangement. Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, the divine protector, had caught the Hindu imagination by his youthful encounters with cowgirls and his vindication of romantic love.[97] The latter symbolized the Hindu idea of salvation through love of God and also provided society with poetic compensations for its own strict code of conduct. The *Gita Govinda* dates from the twelfth century and is comparable in verbal music to poetry by Shakespear.

Pahari paintings also depicts theme of music and dance in paintings. Music was a principal interest and almost every court had singing girls and musicians. Naturally the extent to which music was played varied from state to state but groups of male and female musicians, with or without dances, were common throughout the Hills. Alongside their performances went a sophisticated interest in the theory and practice of music, an awareness of the conventional divisions into which the main melody modes (*ragas*) and sub-modes (*raginis* and *putras*) were grouped and a knowledge of the associations in poetry of the various modes. In contrast to other areas, the Hills had their own form of classification – large, complex and erudite. Six *ragas* or princes, each with five *raginis* or queens, were common to both systems, but in the Hills each *raga* had eight further sub-modes (his *putras* or sons).[98]

The Krishna theme influenced the *Ragamala* tradition indirectly through its broad impact on the *Nayika* tradition which rescued it from preciosity, and also directly, since Krishna himself appears in the visualizations of many melody types. *Raga vasant* is inspired by the joy of spring. In a Kangra painting of the Raga Krishna is dancing on the bank of Yamuna, intoxicated with the exultant spring. Radha accompanies him on a drum. The shrubs in the background have transformed

96 . Archer, W.G., *Indian Miniature*, New York, 1960, pl. 37.

97 . Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, Krishna approaching Radha, Illustration to the Sanskrit poem, the *Gita Govinda*.

98 . For expositions of Indian musical theory with special reference to painting, see p.5. Rawson, *Indian Painting*, Paris, London, 1962.

themselves into huge banquets heavy with blossoms. *Megha malhar* is another *Raga* in the visualization of which Krishna frequently appears. In one painting he blows a white conch hailing the monsoon clouds, with Radha standing nearby.[99] In another he is shown dancing with Radha under a sky heavy with dark, water-laden clouds.

The failure to explore the possibilities of emotive expression through abstract colour and pattern, we have to admit that the Ragamala painting may not be the most perfect visualization of music. But, at its best, it can be a perfectly musical visualization.[100] By the convergence of the traditions of musical analysis, the Krishna theme, Nayika poetry and seasonal songs, the *Ragamala* paintings in course of time worked free from too rigorous an rectitude in musical symbolism and became luminous pastoral scenes, depicting nature in the gaiety of spring or the turbulence of a monsoon storm, following with a sensuous eye every exquisite mood of lovely women and above all broadly evoking the volatile essence of music, its limpid gaiety and profound yearning. A painting from *Gita Govinda* series depicts Krishna and Radha's friends in garden. Krishna performs the cadenced dance with the friends of Radha. One woman is playing drum (*dholak*), four are singing and clapping and one other is playing round drum (*dhapli*).[101]

Many art lovers and painters have become lyrical about the grace and poise of the women of Rajasthan. Rajasthani paintings are rich in source material of celebration of various festivals such as Holi, Diwali, Teej etc.[102] It would be interesting to describe briefly the important Hindu festivals, which are particularly popular in the painting of Rajasthan.

In few parts of India Holi is observed in such a colourful manner as in Rajasthan. The celebrations commence on the eve of the appointed day, when men dress like dancing girls and dance their way through the streets, accompanied by drummers. Young and old perform *danda ras* in folk style, and night long revelries are held. In the morning the frolics are resumed and folk roam the streets, smearing *gulal* (vermilion powder) on the faces of all and sundry. The children gather at street corners and spray coloured

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99 . Chaitanya, *Krishna: A History of Indian Painting*, Pahari Traditions, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 146-147.

100 . Chaitanya, Krishna: op. cit., p. 147.

101 . Folio from the Gita Govinda series as No. 100, Acc no. RV 1990, Museum Rietberg Zurich, Gift of Balthasar and Nanni Reinhart.

102 . Falk Toby and Simon Digby, *Paintings from Mughal India*, London, pl. 28, p. 60.

water on passers-by. The women usually stay indoors but those venturing out are subject to spray. At night huge bonfires are lit, the flames sometimes rising high in the sky[103]. On the following day, the day ritual of smearing *gulal* and splashing coloured water is repeated with greater zest. From the terraces and balconies, the women watch the merry making down below. In the evening crowds gather in the *maidan* and abandon themselves to gaiety and the air is filled with shouts of joy. In a representation of the musical mode *Hindola Raga*, Radha and Krishna are shown gazing at each other while seated on a swing, obvious to the ladies who surround them celebrating holi by scattering coloured powder. There is a pool in the immediate foreground, filled with lotus blossoms and leaves.[104]

Every year in the Hindu month of *Chaira*, the people of Rajasthan celebrate the festival of *Gangaur* with pomp and pageantry. It is the festival of womenfolk, particularly the unmarried ones.[105] They sing and worship the deity *Gangaur* and ask in return for a handsome husband with brave deeds to his credit. The *Gangaur* is much venerated by womenfolk of Rajasthan as the deity is supposed towards off evil and brings good luck to the family.

In this unusual symbol laden painting, an elegant woman, accompanied by a friend, comes to worship a *linga*, the symbol of God Siva.[106] She has brought flowers and holds a bowl, while her friend offers a garland. As she places flowers on the *linga*, the tree next to it bursts into bloom. Pairs of white birds wing their way across the sky in front of a large tree that is rich with foliage. The three mediates between the two women who have come to worship and another of veiled glance, who emerges, arms raised, from a banana plant. This miraculous apparition is a tree goddess (*vrksa devi*) she will grant the wish of the worshipping women, whose face is raised toward her.[107] Two small monkeys have seated themselves on a shrub under the banana plant.

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103 . Pal, Dharam, op. cit., p. 94.

104. Aijazudding, F.S., *Pahari Paintings and Sikh Portraits in the Lahore Museum,* Karachi and Delhi, 1977, pl. 3, p. 16.

105 . Pal, Dharam, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

106 . Apparition of a Wish Granting Iree spirit during worship of the Linga Kotah School, Rajasthan, c. 1700, Private collection published in Kramrisch, Stella: op. cit., pl. 49, p. 167.

107 . In a Buddhist relief of the second century B.C. from Bharhut, arms proffering food and drink to two men reach out from a tree; see Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *la Sculpture de bharhut*, Paris, 1956, pl. XLV, fig. 180, p. 89.

Like Gangaur, the colourful festival of flowers, which celebrates the spring, the Teej celebrates the advent of the rainy season with the familiar rope swing on the verdant trees. On Teej, the third day of sravana, the month which brings rain to the parched land, Parvati was reunited to Siva after long austerities.[108] She accordingly declared the day sacred and proclaimed that whoever invoked her blessings on that day would have her desire fulfilled. Teej, is therefore, held sacred by women. Processions bearing richly attired images of Parvati are taken out in villages and cities, attended exclusively by women. The streets are a riot of colour and music, transformed by festivity. This reflects the spirit of Rajasthan, where the past has a special appeal and is cherished with warmth. The two festivals, one at the start and other at the end of the grueling summer season, both honour Parvati. Teej is the occasion for family reunions. The brother repairs to the marital home of his sister and fetches her to rejoin her parents. Her husband too is invited to partake of the pleasures of her reunion with the family. All the women of the family – daughters, daughters-in-law, housewives and maid servants are given presents of multi-coloured sarees with zigzag patterns, called *lahriya* or *Indra dhanush.* The series are so called because they embody all the colour of the rainbow. Sweets are prepared on a lavish scale.[109]

The present picture is one of the results of such transfer of the Mughal style to local use, in this case probably in Rajasthan.[110] The scene is a shrine to the god Vishnu, but as an illustration to the musical mode *Bangali Ragini* the attention is focused on the youthful ascetic worshipper. The sentiment is of a young girl, her very being ravaged by the longing of separation, who has turned her attention away from emotional and erotic desires to the ascetic and contained life of a sage, be it only temporarily while she gathers her mind.

In Rajasthan the celebration of Diwali is specially charming and colourful. Diwali is not merely one festival but a chain of festivals.[111] It is preceded by 'Dhanteras' and 'Roop Chaudas' and is followed by 'Annakoot' or 'Govardhan' and 'Bhai Doj'. The preparations for the celebration of Diwali begin with a sanitation drive from about Dussehra the dwellings are swept and washed; clothes ornaments and even brass and

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108. Tod, James, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, vol. II, Delhi, 1993, p. 675.
109. Ibid., p. 679.
110. Falk, Toby and Digby, Simon, op. cit., pl. 28, p. 60.
111. Tod, James, op.cit., vol. II, p. 695



Plate- 45 Bangali Ragini; A girl at a shrine, Mughal style in Rajasthan, c. 1630



Plate- 46 Krishna and his wife Rukmini salutes Balrama and his wife Revati after their wedding I Sarda School, Rajasthan, c. 1690

copper utensils are cleaned and polished. Then the housewives get busy in decorating their floors with 'mandanas' to welcome the Goddess Lakshmi.

Two ladies, dressed in Mughal costume, stand on a terrace and let off fireworks. One is dressed in a green full-skirted ankle length *jama* with a gold *patka*, and a male's golden turban.[112] Her pearls necklace is crossed across her bosom. She stands with her left hand resting on her hip. The other wears a magenta coloured skirt and a matching bodice and veil. Behind them to the right is a grey pavilion with a *chikh* or blind of green and mauve horizontal stripes. Red poppies in flowerbeds fill the foreground. The background is gold shading into a black sky. Moon is crescent.

Marriage was celebrated with pomp and show. Some of the Rajput customs are so curious, and so different. No Rajput can marry in his own clan; and the incident was originated in the Norman institutes, to prevent the vassal marrying out of his class, or amongst the enemies of his sovereign.[113] Many of the forms of marriage are according to the common Hindu ritual. The *sat phera*, or seven perambulations round the jars filled with grain, piled over each other the *ganth-jora*, or uniting the garments, and the *hathleva* or junction of hands of bride and bridegroom.[114]

In this Rajasthani painting, the god, except Balarama, elder brother of Krishna, show no divine attributes. The crown he wars is that of a bridegroom (the wedding of Balaram is referred to in the Bhagavata Purana, 9.3.29-36).[115] Balaram's plowshare, which fests conspicuously next to him, is his cognizance. Once, when he had drunk the juice of the flowers of the *kadamba* tree, Balaram had become inebriated and shouted to the river goddess Yamuna to come to him for he wanted to bath in her. The river goddess, however, continued on her course Balaram, with his plowshare dragged her to him and did not release her during the wanderings until all the lands were well watered (Vishnu Purana, 5.25).

Here, Krisna, the Dark God, salutes Balarama by raising his folded hands. Rukmini, Krisna's wife, a particularly moving figure filled with true emotion, repeats the gesture, while her attendant ushers her forward. A sense of deep devotion

112. Ladies with fireworks, Gular, c. 1780, L.M. No. B 122 (02586/1932) Lahore Museum and Pub. in Aijazuddin, F.S., *Pahari Paintings and Sikh Portraits*.
113. Hallam, H., *A view of the State of Europe during the middle ages*, vol. I, London, 1818, p. 190
114. Tod, James, op. cit., vol. II, p. 795.
115. Krisna and His wife Rukmini Great Balarama and his wife Revati after their wedding, Isarda school, Rajasthan, c. 1690 Vajida, Collection of Dr. Alvin O. Bellak.

pervades this group. The bejeweled objects above the folded hands of Krishna and Rukmini seem to be upheld as offerings to Balrama.[116] The jewelry worn by the figures is represented with minute care. A few blosoms are gathered around Balaram's plowshare. The spacing of the figures avoids alignment and monotony on the plain, monochrome ground. A strip of cloudy sky stretches along the upper margin of the painting.

Rajputs and Pahari both type of paintings prove that various kinds of intoxicants were used during the period under review. From contemporary records it is evident that taking of opium, drinking of wine, bhang and smoking were prevalent intoxicants of the age. Bernier dwells upon the practice of use of opium by the Rajputs. He says, "From an early age they (Rajputs) are accustomed to the use of opium, and I have sometimes been astonished to see the large quantity they swallowed.[117] It is equally interesting to know from *Amal-o-gita* that the opium taken early in the morning after bath was supposed to produce exhilarating effect, in the noon, it caused giddiness, and in the evening it produced pleasing effect for all the twenty four hours.[118]

Babur noted that country liquors were prepared out of the juice of date palm in the area near the bank of the Chambal and neighboring villages.[119] According to Tod, in south western Rajasthan extract of *Mahuva* was fermented to yield an intoxicant.[120] Dancing girls were made to drink wine in order to show that the habit of drink was common especially among Rajput women. From a contemporary painting it is clear that women too indulged in intoxicants.[121]

Tobacco gained wide popularity in Rajasthan since its introduction at the Mughal court. It was either puffed through a pipe or a *hukka*. The aristocrats used the pine made of silver or gold studded with jewels. Its wide popularity is evident from the fact the *hukka* was used from the ladies of harem to the people of flower strata.[122]

A princess, clothed in a light dress with tiny patterning, sits on an angular stool, smoking a hookah which is held towards her by a maid. She turns, with agitated

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116. Kamrisch, Stella: op. cit., pl. 82, p. 175.
117. Bernier, F., *Travels in the Mogul Empire 1656-68 A.D.*, Delhi, 1968, pp. 39-40.
118. Dhola Maru, f. 75, Gunsera, f. 49.
119. Babur, *Tuzuk-i-Babri*, f. 285.
120. James, Tod, op.cit., vol. I, p. 60.
121. Pande, Ram : *Painting as a Source of Rajasthan History*, Jaipur, 1985, fig. 8, p. 26.
122. Jain, M.S., *Rajasthan through the Ages*, vol. III, Bikaner, 1997, p. 297.

abruptness, to the right and points with outstretched arm to a maid in striped trousers who holds a falcon on her wrist. On the far left, a third maid pours wine from a bottle into a bowl.[123] Bhang was also commonly used by the men and women both. A Siva temple or a wrestling ground formed a favourable place for persons addicted to *bhanga.*[124]

On the whole, life routine was so planned that there was a significant importance of amusements, sports and games. Everybody rich and poor, young and old, men and women appears to have interest in utilizing his time in joys and pleasures. There were certain recreative games indoor and outdoor in which aristocrats and common people took part directly or indirectly. Among indoor games, gambling with dice was popular during our period. Madan in his Vallabha had recommended the construction of a gambling hall attached to the king's palace. From the literary sources we learn that there were regular gambling house in Rajasthan which the then government permitted to function on payment of a tax. It is further noticed that the young couple or a group of young man used to indulge in gambling dice putting money or any choicest object on stake. Gambling played a significant part in ritual of magical and religious nature.[125]

Pictorial and classical sources of the period under review refer to a game of board with 64 divisions called chess or *satranj.*[126] Of all indoor games, it was considered to be aristocratic and strategic. The game needed two players. It was also expected of the newly married couple to play this game. The rich parents generally presented gold and chessmen studded with precious stone in dowry.

It is another important indoor game which is usually played by two pairs of players with sixteen pieces in four sets each of different colour on a cloth-board. As the paintings of the period depict, the board has four sides putting out in four directions from the rectangular space in the middle, and had little squares in three rows on each side. Three ivory dice with circular dots when thrown determined the move of the

123. A princess smoking, attended by her maids, Kullu, c. 1700, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, published in Archer, W.G., *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, Delhi, 1973, pl. 8, p. 130.
124. Coomaraswamy, A.K., *Rajput Paintings*, Delhi, 1976, pl. LXIV.
125. Jain,M.S., op.cit., p.297.
126. Rao Ratan Singh Vachanika, p. 269; Raj Prakash, ff. 24-25; Dastur Komwar, vol. 25, 1857f, 138.

pieces. The playing of *chaupar* was especially popular among women in general and Rajputs in particular.[127]

Other indoor games were *Pachisi, chauser* and *chandal mandal* which were the other variances of *chaupar*. The *chandal mandal* had a curious blending of human figures with the figures of *chaupar*. In the Dastur Konwar there is a reference to cowry game of 10 squares with 200 cowris to play with. Other games, called *Govind Prema Gyana Chaupar* were played with some objects of throw with the result that the pawn ascends to heaven through ladders or descends back to hell through the tail of the snake. These games reflect the actions of sin and piety of players. In harem these games were very popular in Rajasthan.[128]

The women particularly those of the 'upper' castes were made to observe *parda*. *Parda* was regarded to be symbolic of the social prestige and honour, enjoyed by women of higher classes.[129] Having this notion, in view, the *parda* system was followed deftly and compulsorily.[130] The women of royal families were trained to live in impenetrable *parda* circumscribing their activities in Antah purs or *zanani Dayodis*. Common people could have no access to them. While going out of their residence or making journeys, the women of royal classes used palanquins or carriages, fully covered. Women of noble and well to do families adopted the *parda* system to enhance their prestige.[131] The *parda*, in the long run, began to symbolize a woman's chastity besides indicating her social dignity and prestige. On the other hand the women of lower classes, of the society assisting and helping their male counterparts in the works to earn their living, the *parda* system were a sort of hindrance. But under the impact of the standards set by women of higher classes, these women of the working classes did not remain completely untouched with the *parda* system.[132]

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127. Achaldas Khichi ri vat, f. 52; Ramcharitra, Paintings, f. 82; Dastur Komwar, No. 25, VS 1857 f. 81.
128. Dastur Komwar, vol. 25, VS 1857, f. 138.
129. Goswamy, B.N. and Fischer, Eberhard: *Pahari Masters, court Painters of Northern India*, Delhi 1997, f. 168, p. 384; Fuktar Vatan, No. 206/2, Anup Sanskrit Library, Bikaner.
130. Private letters of Bhaiya Records, from V.s. 1802 to 30/1745 to 1773 A.D. Now available at State Archives Bikaner.
131. Karnavitans, No. 2981, page 23, Anup Sanskrit Library, Bikaner.
132. Futkar Vatan, No.206/2, Anup Sanskrit Library; Chandra, Moti, *Prachin Vesh Bhusha*, p.136.

CHAPTER - IV

WOMEN AT WORK

The contribution of women in Indian society is remarkable. They did all types of works as weaving, painting, spinning, carrying material for buildings, cooking, dancing, singing, playing, various musical instruments, and washing clothes etc. They did work also to earn money and participated equally to the men in several professions. Men were totally depended on women for various types of works such as cooking, fetching water and washing clothes etc. They were not only confined to the household work but opted many other professions as well. The women worked for both skilled and unskilled professions. The women were employed not only in harem but also in the field and craft works. The well known tradition of accuracy and realism makes it portrayals of scenes the court and everyday life particularly for our purpose.

(a) At Home:

Domestic sphere was the most important field of woman's activities. She had to do all the household works.[1] In the early morning she used to grind the corn. Then she prepared food and served it herself. She went to fetch water from the well.[2] She did mud plaster the floor and sweep the house. In leisure she would spin for making garments. Thus her whole day was occupied with the domestic affairs which formed the usual routine.[3]

A number of houses are shown enclosed with in a boundary wall with the house shown in the foreground attracting particular notice. This house has a verandah front of which obviously accommodates a kitchen. A woman is seen making chapattis on an earthen oven (chullha). A man, probably her husband, sits outside kneading dough in a big vassal. Three other men can also be seen in a pose of expecting apparently waiting for their food obviously these were travelers.[4]

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1. Roe and Fryer, *Travels in the Seventeenth Century*, London, 1873, pp. 117-18.
2. Fitch, Ralph, *England's Pioneer in India*, ed. J.R. Ryley, London, 1899, p. 19.
3. Prasad, Rajendra, *Rajasthan through the Ages*, Bikaner, vol. I, 1966, p. 729.
4. Album No. 12, Folio No. 9, Raza Library, Rampur.

A *Hamzanama* folio depicts cooking preparations being done by women.[5] The woman is shown making flour fine by putting it through a sieve. A sun cat ray used for remaining chaff from grain made of straw is shown nearby. A *Razmnama* folio depicts a feast in progress and for the first time women are introduced in the proceedings.[6] They are shown bringing the *qababs* (dishes) a serving piece and one of them can also be seen with a small piece of cloth as cushion on her head as she hands, over a heavy vessel to one of men.

Spinning was done with the aid of a spinning wheel (*charkha*). Fortunately there are a few depictions of the spinning wheel in the painting of our period. The earliest depiction of the spinning wheel is to be found in a folio of *Razmnama,* 1580 A.D. in which the wheel has been shown in a miniature depicting the city Lanka. The spinning wheels have been shown in *Harivamsa* (circa A.D. 1590-95) in a theme depicting Krishna lifting up the mount Goverdhan. The wheels with serrated edges appear in the former depiction and no other mechanism is visible as both instances. The spinning wheels are either shown kept besides women or being worked upon by the women demonstrating no doubt the age old link between the craft of spinning and the women. In an early 17th century painting the actual act of the spinning of yarn has been shown as part of the various other activities being carried out near the gate of a town.

In an *Akbarnama* miniature of late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, an old woman is shown winding yarn on the verandah of her modest house. She is using a wooden wheel for this purpose, which was turned by a crank handle.

A painting of Mughal period shows a prince receiving water at a well.[7] A prince returning from a hunting expedition pauses at a well where three girls are drawing water, one of the girls hands has a gold vessel of water; the prince is dressed in dark green, mounted on a grey stallion coloured orange beneath, an attendant stands behind holding the prince's hunting gun; a little way off a person waits with a camel to which is tied a recently shot blackbuck.

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5. Band, E., *Hamzanama*, vol. 20.
6. Hendly, T.H., *The Razmnamah manuscript Memorial of Jaypore Exhibition*, pl. LXXXVIII, vol. IV, Jaypore, 1883.
7. Folk, Toby and Digby Simon, *Painting from Mughal India*, London, pl. 26, p. 56.

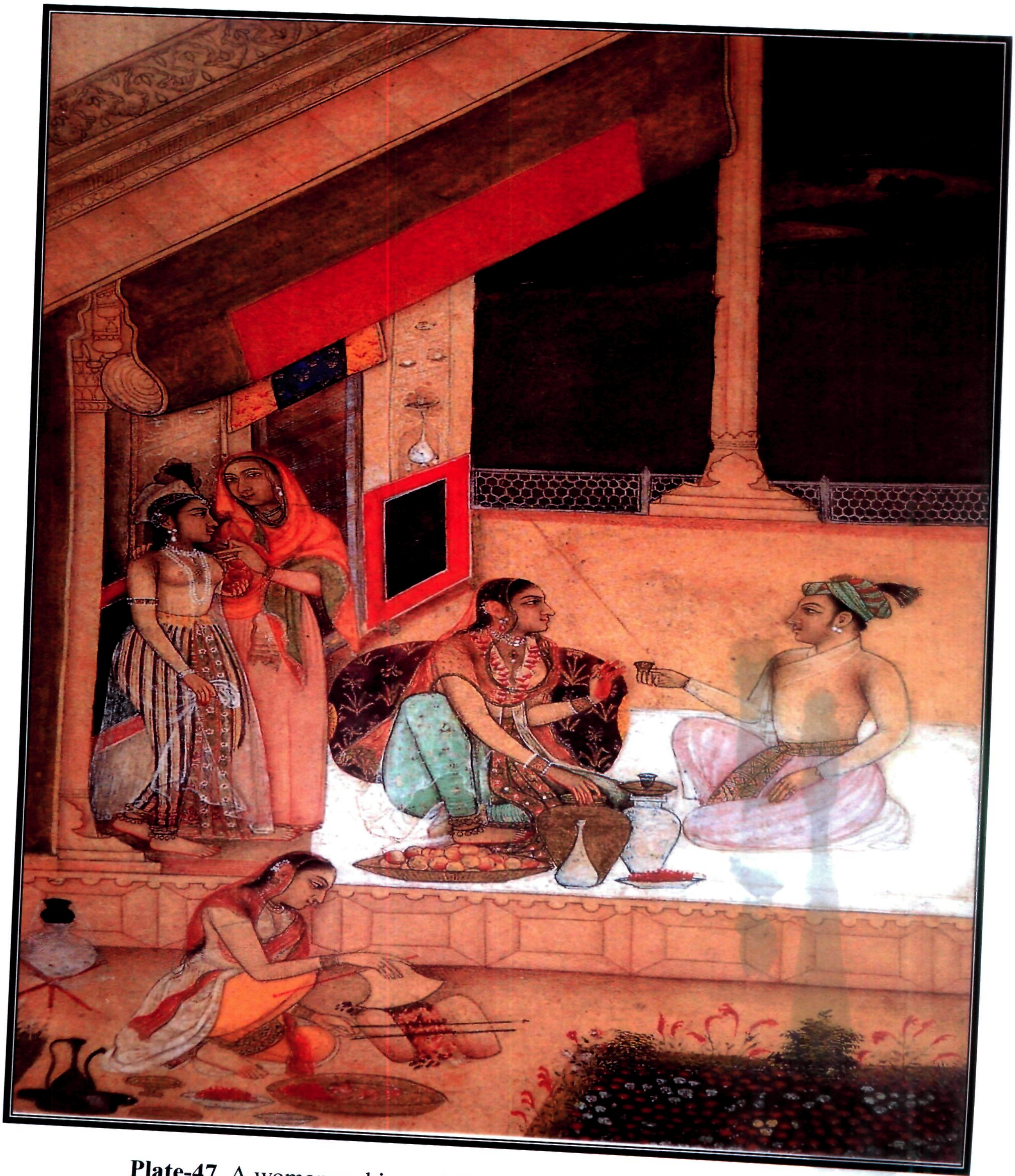


Plate-47 A woman making qababs, c. 1680, Chester Beatty Library



Plate- 48 Women at Village well, c. 1570, detail from Hamzanama, Victoria and Albert Museum

Artisans and Professionals:

The emperor employed a large number of women for haren. There were more than five thousand women and he had given to each a separate apartments.[8] Several chaste women were appointed as *Daroghas* (supervisor) and Mahaldars (superintendent) over each section. The inside of the harem, was guarded by sober and active women, the most trust worthy of them are placed for the apartments of 'His Majesty' and outside the enclosure the eunuchs were placed.

The harem organization of the Mughal emperor was based on the same pattern as the outside administration of the king's household. There were two types of harem staff, firstly women and eunuchs, and secondly male officials and servants who served under the *Mir Saman.*[9] Female employers were further divided into three grades, the high, the middling and the lower. Their selection was done very carefully. The inner portion of the *Shabistan-e-Iqbal* was guarded by brave, skilled and active women and the exterior portion by faithful Rajputs.[10]

The first two grades were supervisor staff of *Mahal* whom Manucci calls "matrons".[11] They communicated the emperor's order out of the harem walls, read out to him all important reports that were sent in by the officers of the state, and recited to him the accounts of the news writers (*Waqia nawis*) and secret agents (*Khufyah nawis*). In fact they supervised the administration inside the *Mahal.* From them were probably selected of those who held the posts of *Mahaldars*, and *wakils*, were well educated so that they can teach the princesses.[12] From the second grade were recruited the *Daroghas* who supervised the work of each section, that is to say the menials, were of two types, slaves and free. Among the former were included the female who were brought as present or were brought in the market.[13]

The interior was looked after by *Mahaldars* and *Daroghas*, while at the doors were *Habshi*, *Tatar*, *Turkish* and *Kashmiri* women.[14] The *Kashmiri* women did not use *parda*. Each lady guard sent the reports to the *Nazir* of all that happened in the harem.

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8. Fazl, Abul: *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. I, tr. H. Blochmann, p. 46.
9. Ansari, Azhar, *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 34, pp. 1 (No1. Jan. 1960).
10. Ansari, Azhar, Ibid., p. 12.
11. Niccolao, Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, vol. 2, p. 330.
12. Fazl, Abul: op. cit., p. 45.
13. Ansari, Azhar, op. cit., p.. 12
14. Tod, James, *Annals and Antiquities*, Crook's ed. I, p. 358.

Whenever the wives of nobles desired to visit the harem they had to notify first to the servants of the seraglio. The king appointed similar officers from among the fair sex with in the *Mahal* as he did not side. The court reports of all the events which occurred in the *Mahal* were sent to the Emperor. The replies or orders were written by the women writers of the harem as directed by the Emperor.[15] The news letter (*Waqia-navis*) were commonly read in the king's presence by the women of the *Mahal*. At night the emperor was guarded by skilled women in the art of archery and other arms. It is the practice of these kinds and the Mughal Princes to entertain matrons as spies, who give (blank information) to these old ladies of the loveliest young women in the empire. Afterwards these matrons by promises and deceit lead them astray, and have they carried off into whatever palace the king or a prince requires.[16]

The slave girls or *bandis*, also called *khawas* or *paristar*. In the elitist hierarchy of the harem, slave girls or maidservants were hardly noticed. These domestics were exposed to the wanton behavior of despotic masters and mistresses, who, however, generally treated them well. Some of these maids belonged to good families and were quite cultured.[17]

To the conquering and ruling Mughals there was no dearth of such women. Ten to twelve servants were attached to every lady of importance. Some princesses had as many as a hundred.[18] They were all beautiful and dressed in the best clothes. Their names were equally attractive. Some slave girls of the seventeenth century had names like *Gulab* (Rose), *Chameli* (Jasmine), *Nargis* (Tulip), *Kesar* (Saffron), *Kasturi* (Musk), *Gul-i-Badam* (Almond flower), *Sosan* (Lily), *Yasmin* (festival), *Champa, Rana-i-gul* (the good flower), *Gul-andam* (shape of a flower), *Gul-Anar* (Pomegranate blossom), *Saloni* (sweet), *Madhumati, Sugandha* (the scented), *koil* (a bird), *Gulrang* (flower coloured), *Mehndi* (Heena), *Dil Afroz* (Heart delighting), *Ketki* (yellowish flower), *Moti* (the Pearl), *Mrig Nain* (Gazelle eyed), *kamal Nain* (Lotus eyed), *Basanti* (festival spring), *Hira* (Diamond), *Kishmish* (Raisin), *Pista* (Pistachio).[19]

15. Fazl, Abul, op. cit., p. 681-684.
16. Manucci, op.cit., vol. II, pp. 311-14.
17. Lal, K.S., *Twlight of the Sultanate*, p. 261.
18. Price, Major David, trs. of *Tarikh-i-Salim shahi* under the title of "*Memories of the Emperor Jahangir*, London 1829, Indian Edition, Calcutta, 1906, p. 51.
19. Manucci, Niccolao, op. cit. ,vol.II., pp. 336-38.

Musicians and dancers were also an integral feature of court life. Royal patronage of these arts encouraged many musicians of the day. Innumerable paintings of the period depict the musicians and singers with their instruments. It is surprising to note that very few Mughal paintings portray a wholly musical theme. From the greater part the musicians are shown as part of the festivities of a royal nature at court or on the battle field inspiring the soldiers with their frenetic drumbeats. They are also being seen in informal garden scenes, at the feats and as a part of entertainment in the royal private apartments.

The women musicians have been mostly shown in scenes of informal sittings[20], entertaining both male and female patrons. At the celebration, in Kabul at Humayun's birth, the women musicians can be seen together with their male counterparts sitting in a row opposite to the other (male) musicians, they play on the dafli (a drum) and on a slender reed like flute. The *dafli* seems to have been a popular instrument with women musicians, as a folio from the *Jamal ut Tawarikh* reveals.[21] A much more informal scene in portrayed is Akbari paitning, which shows women musicians entertaining a young prince and his lady in a garden pavilion.[22] The instruments being played are ektara (lute) and tambourines.

In the processional scene, composed by Jahangir's artist Manohar, Musicians cannot be recognized seated on horses blowing trumpets and beating drums, while other members including female musicians, play the tambourine and keep time by clapping. In another Jahangir's painting[23] the emperor is seen celebrating the festival of *abpashi* (sprinkling of rose water) and musicians (including female performers) can be seen at the royal court.

The musical instruments depicted in Mughal paintings could be broadly classified under various categories like cymbals, bells, lip blown instruments, drums and stringed instruments (lutes).[24] Cymbals included the *sani* and *jharijha*, the latter of which was played with other instruments in the royal *naqarkhana*. Among the lip-blown instruments were *surna* (flute) and *nafiri* (the subtle difference between the two

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20. Suleimani, Hamid: *Miniatures of Baburnama*, pl. 45.
21. Hajek, Lubor: *Indian Miniatures of Mughal School*, pls. 1 & 2.
22. Album No. 4 & 9, Raza Library, Rampur.
23. Brown. Percy, *Indian Painting under the Mughals*, pl. XXXI.
24. Popely, M.A., *The Music of India*, Calcutta, 1950, p. 127.

is explained by Abul Fazl)[25], the *Qarna*, the *alghoza*. The last, mentioned extremely popular with the male and female musicians at the Mughal court. Drums included the famous *naqara* which could be loaded on horses and camels, and the *damana* both of which were beaten with sticks by one person. The *daf* (*dafli*) and the *chang* were tambourines used often in musical functions which included dance *Dhol* (later day *dholak*), *mriganga, awaj* and the *damru* were played for their robust sound, the tone of which was dependent on the degree of tension of the skin stretched across the almost elliptical drum. Lutes included the Persian *rubab*[26], the Indian *Vina*, the lute which resembled the Arabic *Kamancha* and the *tambura*. Lastly wood blocks and bells were also used by the musicians of the period.

A survey of Indian painting depicting dance and dancers of the period reveals that the male dancers invariably took a back seat to their female counterpart. These miniatures also succeed in depicting a few specialized form of dance as distinct from the general body movements that symbolized dance. A *Baburnama* painting shows Babur enjoying a dance performance in a garden.[27] The dancers are a man and a woman. The latter, dressed in a long flowing rob (*Peshwar)* with an *odhni*, sways to the sounds of the mandolin being played, her arms spread wide in dance *ghungroo* (anklet bells) at her ankles, and wrists, and the attire is completed by a Turkish head dress with a feather in it. However, it is the male dancer who compiles attention. Dressed in the conventional *jama* (gown) and half length trousers, he can be seen executing a jumping movement flourishing a sword in each hand. This must have been sword dancing, which required considerable skill and dance concentration.

Dancers are also shown as part of court entertainment. A miniature from *Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Timuria* portrays four female dancers all dressed in the customary *peshwaz*[28] One of them plays the *dafli* while moving with others in vigorous positions. In another more private setting, a prince attended by maid servants and musicians watched a dancing girl.[29] Dressed in the conventional long gown, the dancer has a set of castanets in her hands.

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25. Fazl, Abul, op. cit., p. 53-54.
26. Babur, *Baburnama*, p. 504.
27. Suleimani, Hamid, op.cit., pl. 45.
28. Fol. 205b, Khudabaksh.
29. Cat. No. 14121, A.I.I.S.

Feasts and weddings too required the attendance of dancers. They are shown dancing in the inner and outer courtyards of a house, as part of the weeding festivities.[30] Another wedding scene painted by Basawan (Khamsa of Nizami)[31], is notable for the colour. Scheme affords of the dancer's dress, the dress itself being slightly different from the *peshwar* depicted earlier here the dancer is attired in a yellow shirt trucked in at the waist, with close fitting red trousers and *odhani* draped over the shoulders. A more provocative dress is shown worn by two female dancers in a dance duet.[32]

In an interesting depiction, Akbar is seen watching a dance being performed by dancing girls brought from Bar Bahadur's palace at Malwa.[33] Dressed in *cholis* (small bodies) fitting under the breast, exposing the knees, and well fitting traditional trousers with a gauze *dupatta* flung cordlessly across the bodice, these dancers perform bare foot with handles forming the graceful movements of the dance known as *kathak*. They have small caps on and *ghungroos* over their wrists. The audience includes several women and the dance is being performed in Akbar's inner apartments.

It would be interesting to know any social stigma was attached to these dancers who performed for both private and public audiences. Pietro Della Valle says "certain Indian women of the town, public dancers, gave us some pastime, by dancing to the sound of drums and other instruments which were sounded by their husbands with great noise?" The presence of husbands then must have certainly afforded these dancers an aura of respectability.[34]

Bernier talking of the singing and dancing girls (Kanchinies) kept by Shah Jahan in his seraglio is more indeed the prostitutes seen in *bazaars* but those of more private and respectable class, who attend the grand wedding of nobles for the purpose of singing and dancing.[35]

Dancers were generally performed in restricted assemblies and still they were quite popular and added to delight on occasion. Royal ladies of the harem often entertained

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30. *Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Timuria*, Khudabaksh Oriental Public Library, Patna, fol. 406.
31. Hajek, Lubor: op. cit., pt. III,.
32. Cat no. 17024 AI IS.
33. Godden, Rumer: op.cit. pl. 47. This Akbarnama painting has also been published in the times of India, Annual, 1963, pl. 5.
34. Pietro Della Valle, *Travels of Pietro Della Valle in India*, vol. I, p. 22.
35. Bernier, Francois, *Travels in the Mogal Empire (1656-68)*, Oxford, 1934, pp. 273-274.

themselves with dance performances. Although Aurangzeb prohibited dancing and singing at court, yet he allowed it in his palace for the diversion of the queens and his daughters. According to Bernier Shah Jahan was fond of fair sex and introduced at every fair and festival the seraglio singing and dancing girls called kanchinies (the gilled, the blooming), and kept them there for that purpose the whole night.[36]

Some ladies of royal family took keen interest in music and were themselves good singers. Ratnavali, the wife of Puranmal, sang Hindi melodies sweetly.[37] Man Singh's queen Mrignayani was expert in music.[38] Meera Bai was a well known singer. It is said that Nur Jahan and Zebunnisa Begum also sang well and the former even composed songs.[39] Just like dancing music also enhanced the gaiety of different ceremonies like birth day, marriage, etc. In this way many ladies took keen interest in music. The *Dadni* women were employed to perform *sohlas* and Drupad on birthday and marriage ceremonies. Abul Fazl refers to a particular class of female singers known as the *sezdah tate* class. He says, "the women while they sing play upon thirteen pairs of *talas* at once, two being on each elbow, two on the junction of the shoulder blades and two on the finger of each hand they are mostly from Gujrat and Malwa.[40] Besides *Dadni* there were *Hurkiyah* women who played the *tala* and also sang.[41] Paintings of ladies holding various musical instruments show on lady playing on a *Duff*, and another on *Bansuri*.

The wives of the nobles visited the ladies of the Emperor's household and vice versa. They were entertained with sweet drinks (*sherbet*) and betel leaves which were favourites of the aristocratic ladies.[42]

From the picture on an interior scene of Jahangir's durbar we may turn to an opposite effect of a exterior shown on this plate.[43] Flanking the elephants are two groups of mounted musicians energetically blowing on their trump lets *turhi* and *naferi*, or beating the drums, *naqara* in front of these is a line of Jhandi bardars bearing gaily

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36. Bernier, Francois: Ibid, pp. 274-276.
37. Fazl, Abul: *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. III, p. 273.
38. Sarwani, Abbas Khan: *Tarikh-i-Shershahi* tr. Elliot & Dowson vol. IV, p. 402.
39. Joshi, Umesh: *Bhartiya Sangeet Ka Itihas*, p. 204.
40. Joshi, Umesh: Ibid, p. 246.
41. Joshi, Umesh: Ibid., pp. 264, 334.
42. Coomaraswamy,A.K., *Catalogue of Indian Collections in the Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston, 1924,Ladies holding various musical instruments, Plate iii, V, xxxvi, xivii.
43. Brown, Percy, op.cit., pl. xxxi.

coloured pennons or *Shan-o-Shaukat* and with them are several *banduqchis* who are carrying guns wrapped in brocaded coverings behind the elephants of are more musicians one group of men, the other of women, all playing vigorously singing and beautiful time. In the upper group called *Kalavat* or *gavayya* which is a mixed assembly of Hindus and Muhammadans, two men will be observed with stringed instruments like large mandolins known as *sarud*. The women musicians called *bandi* are also proclaimed the magnificence of the monarch in song accompanied with the drum, *dholak* and tambourine, *duff*.

When the singers and dancers were joined by instruments players, the atmosphere became surcharged with rhythmic symphony. Abul Fazl says that the *Dadni* women played on a *duff* (drum) and *dafzon* and tambourine. According to him *Dadnis* were Punjabi singers and *Qawwals* belong to this class. [44] Dancers were generally performed in restricted assemblies of royalty and nobility and added to delight of marriages, birthday and such other ceremonial occasions.

In the pursuit of pleasure slave girls and maids were as much important, as in demand as any *Kanchinies* concubines or even the free born, whether they were purchased from the market[45] captured during war, selected during excursions or came with brides whatever their channel of entry in the harem. The slave girls kept in the *Mahal* were always elegantly attired. Their garments were sometimes gifted to them by their masters or mistresses.

They use different manners of music most commonly they are hired at solemn feasts where they play sing and dance. There is scare any meeting of friends without them. Women also took part in the *Akhara*[46], which was an entertainment held at night by the nobles of this country some of whose (female) domestic servants are taught to sing and play. Four women lead off a dance and some graceful movements are executed. Four others are employed to sing while four more accompany them with cymbol, two others play the *Pakhwaj*, two the *Upang*, while the Deccan *Rabab*, the *Vina* and *Yantra* (these are all various types of musical instruments) are each taken by one player. Besides the usual lighting arrangements and lamps of entertainments, two women holding lamps stand near the circle of performers.

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44. Fazl,Abu'l, *Ain-i-Akbari*,vol.III,pp.256-257.
45. Bernier, Francois: op. cit., p. 426.
46. Badaoni, Abdul Qadir: *Muntakhab ut Tawarikh*, p. 332.

European praise the dance of *domnis* some other of Persian women. There are many classes of dancers. Writes Pelsaert, "among them are *lolonis* who are descended from courtesans who have came from Persia to India and sing only in Persian, and a second class *domnis* who sing in Hindustani, show songs are considered more beautiful, more amorous, and more profound, than those of Persians, while their tunes are superior, they dance, too the rhythm of the songs. Other classes are named *harknis* who have various styles of singing and dancing but who are all a like accommodating people.[47] Mostly of these accommodating people were just harlots and prostitutes. Peter Mundy, who visited India in 1628, also mentions about *lalnis, harknis,* domnis, etc. These were so called because of their different styles of music.[48] According to Manucci, "all these women are pretty, have a good style and much grace in their gait are very in their talk and exceedingly lascivious, their only occupation, outside the duties of their office, being lewdness.[49] The kawwalis of this class are singing mostly after the Delhi and Jaunpur styles and Persian verses in the same manner.[50]

In western Indian school of art we also find the figures of dancing women appear regularly as border decoration, one being perfectly Indian in type and the other with round face seems to have been inspired by the Persian Mongol type.[51]

The female attendants too served in a similar fashion. This painting depicts female royal personages, these women can be seen fanning and standing ready to serve their mistresses.[52] In one interesting depiction a royal lady travels in a covered palanquin while two women ride by its side.[53] Notable is the fact that these women, probably the royal lady's attendants have been dressed in the fashion of the day.

A painting from *Anwar-i-Suhaili* gives us information about women Gardner. This is established by the unusual depiction of a woman clearing a water channel in a garden in a miniature dated c. 1610 A.D.[54]. She is shown using as iron shovel with a long

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47. Pelsaert, Francisco, *Jahangir's India,* p. 126.
48. Mundy, Peter: *Travels of Peter Mundy in Asia,* (1608-1677), vol. II, p. 216.
49. Manucci, op. cit., vol. II, p. 336.
50. Fazl, Abul, , op.cit., vol. III, pp. 271-72.
51. Chandra, Moti, *Jain Miniature Painting from Western India,* p. 38, Figs. 93-105; Lalit Kala, No. 12, October 1962, pp. 9-15.
52. Suleiman, Hamid, op. cit., pls. 7, 35.
53. Gascoigne, B., *Great Moghuls Photographs,* pp. 154-55.
54. Khandalvala and Chandra, *Miniatures and Sculptures from the collection of late Sir Cownsji,* Prince of Wales Museum, pl. 17.



Plate- 49 Washermen and his wife, Anwar-i-Suhaili, 1597 A.D., Bharat Kala Bhawan, Varanasi

handle as she clears the water channel she is dressed in the usual fashion of the period.

Margin painting of a folio from an album of the Jahangir shows gardeners engaged in various jobs.[55] Women are again shown, this time there being two of them. They can be seen carrying plants; one is an earthen ware pot and the other roots protectively encased in mud.

A late 17th century Mughal painting shows a vivid contrast between that of a royal hunt and that of aboriginal tribe people.[56] A leaf skirted hunter is shown taking aim at a black buck with his female companion shielding him. She holds a lamp and a bell in her hands, and is adorned with a garland of flowers. Theme has been repeated in a eighteenth century painting and the *bhil* couple depicted here too is scantily dressed.[57] The torch is rather useful in shape resembling the modern loud speaker seen sideway and a candle was probably kept inside.

A washer man has been shown in another miniature.[58] Here a man and a woman (presumably a married couple) are shown washing clothes by the bank of a stream while man beats clothes on stone 'washing board' and woman is shown wringing out water form a washed article of clothing after having wrapped it around a stump for support. A big basket and a forked tree stump are shown nearby. This woman wears a red skirt tucked above her knees and a brief blouse.

Yet another miniature has for its theme the famous incident of Ram's servant listening to the *dhobi* beating his wife.[59] In this interesting painting the courtyard of a washer man's house has been portrayed most realistically. The *dhobi* is shown shouting at his wife who sits covering in the inner door way. While a knot of people (probably fellow washer man and washer woman) standing in the courtyard are shown listening to him. Thus while the professional washer women have been shown at work both at river as well as at home.

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55. Beach, M.C., *The Grand Mogul, Imperial Painting in India (1600-1660)*, Massachusetts, 1978, pl. 17.
56. Robinson, B.W.: *Islamic Painting and the Art of the Book*, pls. 135 & 155.
57. Cat No. 8902, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi.
58. *Anwar –i- Suhaili*, B.K.B. folio no. 160.
59. *Razmnama (*British Museum), folio no. 489.

An *Akbarnama* painting depicts a construction site of Fatehpur Sikri. This painting provides information about women labourers.[60] The bounding of the bricks is shown being done by female workers (*Surkhikob*). The material bricks, stone, mortar had to be carried to the upper levels as the construction proceeded bricks and mortar was carried up in pans and baskets by female labourers. Unskilled professionals were usually employed in various odd jobs.[61] However, Mughal paintings show them as mostly engaged in building construction the labourers are seen involved in all allied crafts collecting mortar, carrying loads of bricks and stones.

Women were an important part of this labor group. This painting shows them at work at construction sites, engaged in breaking bricks, collecting its fine dust (surkhi) to use in mortar making and carrying pans of mortar to the bricks layers, walking to reach the craftsman working on the top.[62] But they have not been shown taking part in more heavy and arborous work which was left instead to their male co-workers.

Women must have also taken up the profession of painting. This is proved by a rare depiction of woman painter.[63] The young artist is shown in the inner courtyard of a house, with another woman (her chaperon) sitting behind her. Three models, sitting in a line, include a young woman covered up with a shawl, a female child holding lotus flower in her hand, and an old woman. The painter herself is a young dressed in a long skirt and an *odhni*. She keeps the painting board on which the drawing sheet is tacked over one knee and is shown sketching with a pen. Small sea shells of paint are kept on the ground and other women is depicted in the background looking on at the scene in the courtyard.[64]

A women artist has been depicted in a *Ragmala* painting dated 1628 A.D. of the Mewar School drawn by artist Sahbdin. It shows a woman drawing the likeness of her mistress, lover on a big rectangular drawing board with a thin pen/brush. The sources of Mughal period refer information about women painters.[65] From the literary and

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60. *Akbarnama*, ff. 1, 245 (Cahstr Beaty Library Burlin), pls. 43, 45, 73, 82, 114 (Victoria Albert Museum).
61. Gray, B., *The Arts of India*, pls. 91, XLIX.
62. Brown, Percy, *Indian Architecture*, pl. LXIV, fig. 182.
63. B.K.B. Varanasi, Cat. No. 682.
64. A women artist has been depicted in a Ragmala painting dated 1628 A.D. of the Mewar School, Drawn by artist Sahibdin, it shows a woman drawing the likeness of her mistress lover on a big rectangular drawing board with a thin pen/brush (cat no. 63, 1621, B.M.).
65. Verma, S.P.: *Mughal Painters and their work*, p. 25.

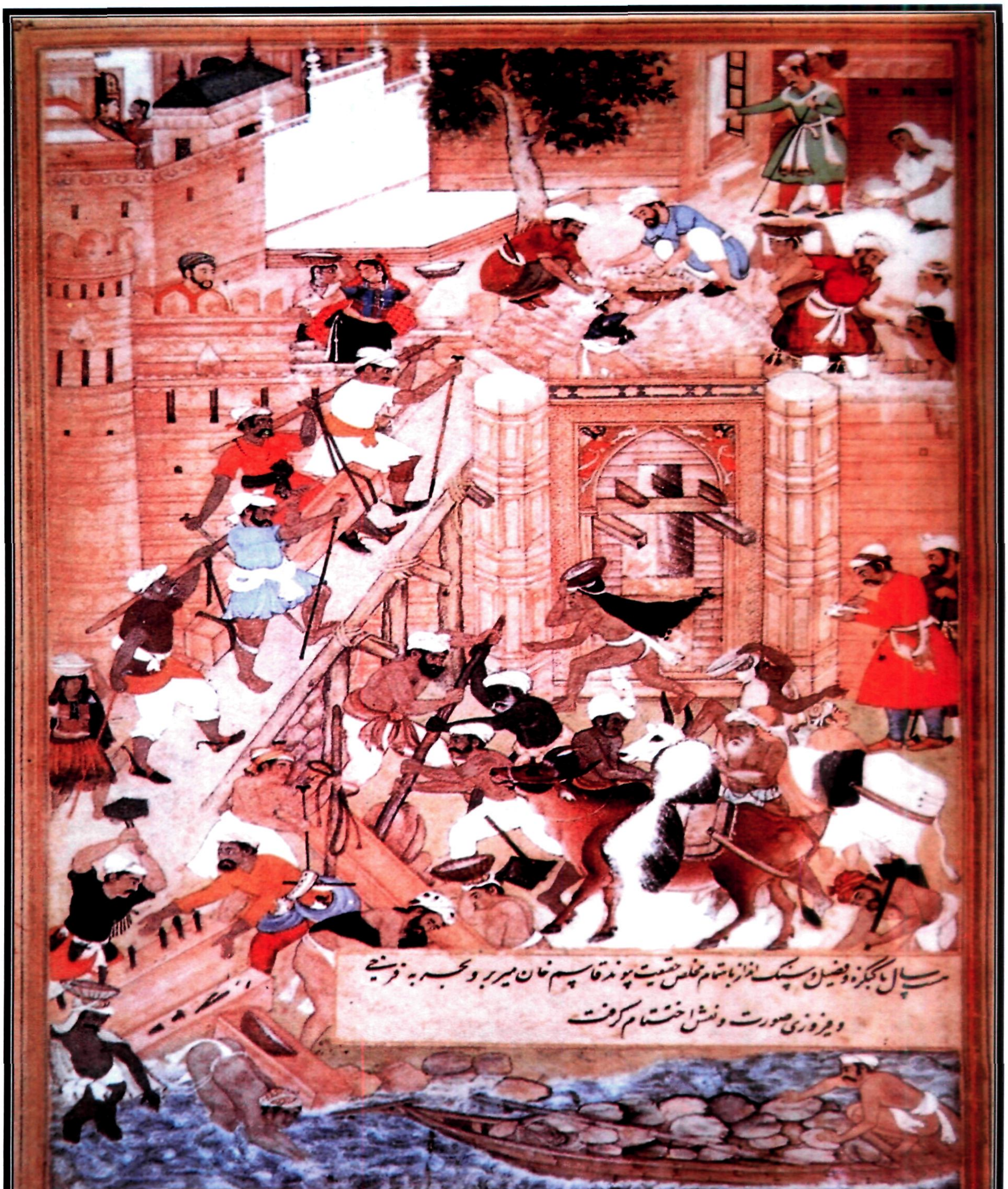


Plate- 50 Workmen building Red Fort Agra

pictorial evidences we can know about three painters, Nadira Banu, Sahifa Banu and Ruqaiya Banu. They worked during the reign of Akbar and Jahangir. Nadira Banu was the daughter of Mir Taqi and a pupil of Aqa Riza, her surviving work belongs to the last years of Akbar's reign but she appears to have enjoyed Jahangir's patronage as well. A miniature of St. Cecila, copied from Jerome wierix, bearing the inscription 'Nini' on the lower margin lodged in the vantage collection. Asok Kumar Das thinks that Nini is probably a female name, though this is a doubtful.

Nini a court artist of the reign of Jahangir (1605-27) evidently copied this work from an *Italian painting.*[66] According to an inscription on the two surviving miniatures, Nadira Banu was the daughter of Mir Taqi. She is also described in both inscriptions as a pupil of Aqa Riza, the well known painter in the service of prince Salim during Akbar's reign. Nadira Banu also worked at Jahangir's atelier at Allahabad. In an inscription on miniature apparently a signature in which a lady painter calls herself a servant (slave, Banda) of Padshah Salim.[67]

Both miniatures are made after western engraving A.K. Das notes that the colour scheme in miniature closely corresponds with the original.[68] There is no evidence that these pictures ever arrived at the Mughal court, and Das conjectures that Nadira Banu was probably guided in restoring the colour by Jesuits resident in the court. But it is not known that there was any Jesuit at Allahabad.[69]

Ruqaiya Banu, a woman painter is known from a single undated miniature characteristic of the late 15th century Safavid School. It is uncertain if she had anything to do with the Mughal School. No miniature from her brush bearing the signs of the Mughal *Qalam* is known.[70] A miniature on a Christian theme executed at Jahangir's atelier (copied after the engraving by Jan Saddler) but he gives no reasons for so surprising an attribution Das explains miniature as a copy of an earlier Persian painting. Sahifa Banu seems originally to have been a painter both her inscribed miniatures being adopted after originals by Agha Mirak and Bihzad of the Persian

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66. Clark, S.C., *Mughal Paintings, the School of Jahangir*, p. 21.
67. Verma, S.P., op. cit., p. 309.
68. Das, A.K., *Mughal Painting during Jahangir's time*, Calcutta, 1978, pp. 234-5, pl. 70.
69. Beach, M.C., *The Gulshan Album and its European Sources*, BMFA, 332, 1965, fig. 10 and 10d.
70. Das, A.K., op. cit., p. 235.

school.[71] Further establish Sahifa Banu's affiliation with the imperial atelier. No details on the painter's background are available. Clarke's assertion is that she was either a Mughal princess or a personage of high rank in unconvincing.

Thus the paintings of the period are very rich and have ample material which proves that the women played a significant role in the society. The women worked to earn money. The depiction of women in the paintings show the women worked for several professions like dancing, painting, cooking, weaving, washing clothes and carrying loads etc. The sources of the present period prove that there were some other professions like dancing, music, superintendents of harem security. These painting throw light on the day to day life of the women, that how women took part in different professions and how she faced ups and downs of the life in that period.

71. Clarke, S.C., *Victoria and Albert Museum Drawings: Thirty Mogul Paintings from the school of Jahangir (17th century) and Four Panels of Calligraphy in the Wantage Bequest*, London, 1922, no. 27, pl. 18.

CHAPTER - V

AN ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S SOCIAL AND EOCNOMIC CONDITION

The socio-economic life of women is an interesting topic of study among historians. We cannot ignore their contribution in society. The position of women in the Indian society changed during the Mughal period. The Mughal Age not only witnessed the glorious achievements of its emperors and princes, but also that of the princesses, queens and other ladies of the royal Mughal harem. The ladies of the Mughal dynasty were almost as remarkable as their men and in certain cases even more cultivated. These beautiful, educated and extremely talented women not only contributed towards the social, cultural, literary, artistic and economic fields, but also yielded great power and played a dominant role in contemporary politics.

During the Mughal age, the first lady of the realm was usually the emperor's mother and not his chief queen, except in the case of Nur Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal. Abul Fazl said that when long fasts came to an end, the first dishes of meat went to Akbar from his mother's palace.[1] Once when Akbar's mother was travelling in a palanquin from Lahore to Agra, Akbar was travelling with her. At one place he took the palanquin upon his own shoulders and carried her from one side of the river to another.[2] At one place in the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Jahangir reveals his love and respect to his mother in these words: on the same day, Her Majesty the revered Maryam Zamani (his mother) came from Agra, and I acquired eternal good fortune form the blessing of waiting on her. I hope that the shadow of her bringing up and affection may be perennial on the head of this suppliant.[3]

The daughters of the Mughal family or the Mughal princesses occupied places of great honour in the seraglio. The birth of a girl in those days was less welcomed than that of a boy. But the Mughal emperors loved their daughters a lot and made the best arrangements for their education and cultivation of their talents. Abul Fazl gives information about the celebration of a girl child during the reign of Akbar. He writes,

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1. Fazl, Abul, *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. I, tr. By Blochmann, Calcutta, 1873, pp. 61-62.
2. Foster, W., *Early Travels in India (1583-1619)* contains narratives of Coryat (pp. 234-287), Bombay, 1968, p. 278.
3. Jahangir, Nur-ud-din Muhammad, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, tr. by Alexander Rogers & H. Beveridge, Delhi, 1968, vol. II, p. 68.

"two and a half months after Prince Salim, in November 1569, a daughter was born in Akbar's harem". The girl was named Khanum, and Akbar "ordered rejoicings".[4]

The most important position a lady occupied, the more privileges she enjoyed. If she was childless, she was allowed to bring up the child of some other royal lady as her own. Maham Begum, one of Babur's principle wives and the mother of Humayun had lost four children after Humayun's birth. She was given Hindal and Gulbadan, the children of another wife Dildar Begum and she brought them up.[5] The childless first wife of Akbar, Ruqqaiah Sultan was given Prince Salim's son Khurram after the child was born.[6] She brought him up with a lot of love and care as revealed by Jahangir in his memoirs when he wrote, my father had given my son Khurram into her charge, and she loved him a thousand times more than if he had been her own. Shahjahan's second son Prince Shuja was brought up by Nur Jahan[7] as per Jahangir's wishes. A folio in the British library, from *Akbarnama* shows Akbar and Mariyam Makhani in Humayun's camp (1542)".[8]

Jiji Anagah may, however, have been the principal nurse, in the sense that Akbar drew most of his milk from her, for we are told by Abul Fazl how other nurses accused her of "practicing incantations" so as to prevent the infant Akbar from accepting anyone else's milk but her own.[9] Some nurses of Akbar are Daya Bhaval, Fakhar-un-Nisa Anaga, Bhaval Anaga, Hakimch, Bibi Rupa, Khaldar Anaga and Pija-jan Anaga etc.[10]

During the Mughal period girls, like boys, received early education in a 'Maktab'[11], which was a permanent institution of primary as well as elementary education. In these 'Maktabs', 'Maulvees' were appointed for two purposes – to lead prayers and to teach children. For the education of girls there was arrangement of separate

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4 . Fazl, Abul, *Akbarnama*, vol. II, tr. H. Beveridge, Calcutta, 1921-1948, p. 509.
5 . Begum, Gulbadan, *Humayun Nama* tr. by A.S. Beveridge, Delhi, 1983, p. 8-9.
6 . Jahangir, Nuru-ud-Din Muhammad, op.cit. (tr.) vol. 1, p. 48.
7 . Ibid., vol. II, p. 45.
8 . British Library, *Akbarnama*, MS Or. 12988, fol. 22a, and Titley, Norah M., *Miniatures from Persian Manuscripts: A Catalogue and subject Index of Paintings from Persia, India, and Turkey in the British Library and the British Museum*, London, 1977, p. 4.
9 . Fazl, Abul, *Akbarnama*, vol. I, p. 130.
10 Begum, Gulbadan, op. cit., pp. 185, 122.
11 . Bhagi, M.L., *Medieval India Culture and Thought*, 1965, p. 158.

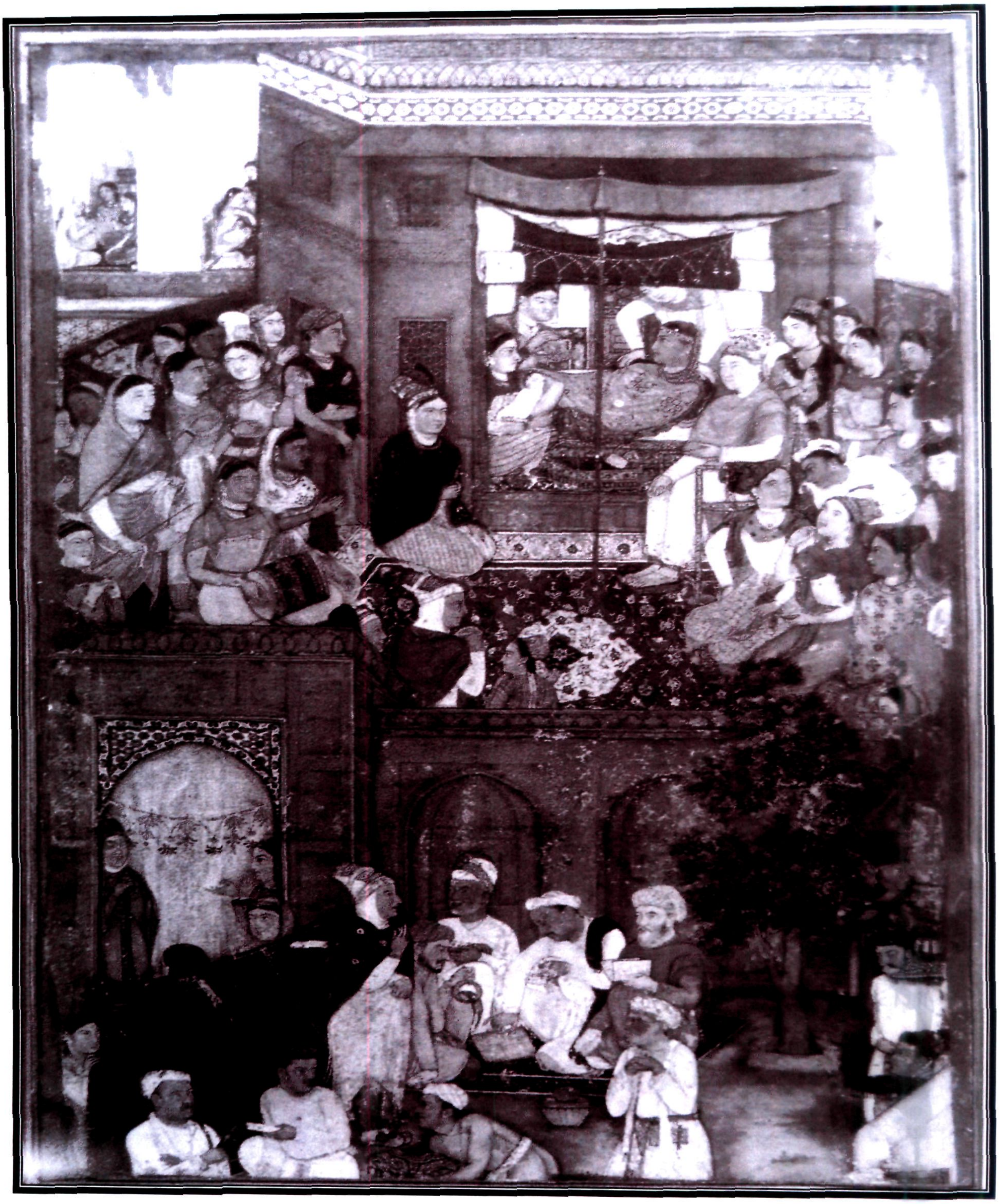


Plate- 51 Birth of Jahangir, attributed to Bishan Das from Jahangirnama Manuscripts, Mughal, Ca. 1620

'Maktabs'.[12] But usually, up to the primary standard the girl received their education in the same school where the boy read.

During the Mughal age, higher education of Muslim women was mostly confined to the upper classes of society. The emperors, nobility and higher classes were keenly interested in imparting higher education to their ladies. Believing that, education made bright the path to the apprehension of truth, they adorned their ladies with the jewels of '*Ilm*' (knowledge). These women had ample opportunities and leisure for intellectual pursuits. For the education of their girls, well to do classes appointed learned ladies or old men of tried merits[13], in their own houses, while highly paid educated matrons and superintendents[14] were appointed in the royal harem. Among the inmates of royal harem, those who were very much interested in receiving higher education had the facility of instruction from several learned scholars.

The curriculum for the secondary and higher education included Ethnics, Arithmetic, Accounts, Agriculture, Economics, the art of Administration, Physics, Logic, Natural Philosophy, Abstract Mathematics, Divinity, History, Medicine, Morals, Law, Ritual, Rhetoric, Household matters, Poetry, Prose, Novels, Astrology, Geography, Scholasticism, Jurisprudence, Tafsir, Fiqhah, Hadith, and traditions, Mysticism, Grammar, Syntax, Biography (lives of Prophets) and calligraphy.[15]

As for their choice in the selection of subjects and books, the Muslim ladies were very fond of poetry, as per the fashion of the day, the spirit of which came from their Persian lady teachers[16], who often dictated poems to them. The well known books of Shaikh Sadi Shirazi's 'Gulistan' and 'Bostan'[17] written in the form of poetry got much popularity among the students of that time. The ladies of the harem took great delight in reading these outstanding books, in their leisure hours. Persian works. as these were not mere books of poetry, but were treated as a treasured sea, full of knowledge and lessons.[18] Besides the Holy Quran and the study of 'Hadis' (Ahadith) the fair sex were taught Persian and Arabic literature, Elementary Arithmetic,

12. Jaffar, S.M., *Some Cultural Aspects of Muslim Rule in India*, Peshawar, 1939, p. 85.
13. Chopra, P.N., *Some Aspects of Society and Culture during the Mughal Age*, 2nd Edition, 1963, p. 61.
14. Manucci, Niccolao, *Storia do Mogor*, Eng. tr. by Irvine, Vol. II, pp. 330-331.
15. Fazl, Abul, *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. I, p. 289.
16. Sarkar, J.N., *Studies in Mughal India*, Calcutta, 1919, p. 301.
17. Manucci, Niccolao, op.cit., vol. II, p. 331.
18. Sarkar, J.N., *Studies in Mughal India*, p. 301.

Theology, History, Astronomy and Mathematics.[19] Some of them also gained proficiency in the art of calligraphy.[20] Law was also a subject of interest for them.[21] Many Muslim ladies had deep knowledge of medicine and treatment[22], which shows that either by experience, family background or education they had acquired such knowledge. The art of administration was regarded very important for the ladies of the royal household[23], and therefore, it was taught to them particularly.

So far as the higher education of Muslim ladies is concerned only the rich and well to do have opportunities for this. Generally, girls, after acquiring primary education, were put under the tuition of some elderly educated ladies. The widows of the middle classes generally imparted religious education to the poor girls in their own houses and considered it a sacred duty.[24] The masses remained mostly illiterate. Owing to poverty, they had to perform domestic duties, so hardly got time for intellectual pursuits. Those belonging to agricultural and working classes helped their men folk in their home industries such as farming, cattle breeding, weaving, dyeing and other professions. Thus the ladies of the poor class had, unfortunately, to be occupied too much with domestic and farm work and with children and they hardly found leisure for intellectual pursuits. Among them, if some got time for education, their education was confined only to the reciting of the Holy Quran, and that was regarded as their great achievement in the field of learning.

The contributions in the field of learning and education, made by the Mughal rulers of India, are indeed worthy of special consideration. Under their supervision and care their daughters and other distinguished ladies of the harem, received education that immortalized their names. For instance, Babur's daughter, Gulbadan Begum, was credited the authorship of Humayun Namah. In 'Humayun Namah' we find the names of other educated and distinguished ladies. Gulberg, Bega Begum, Dildar Begum and Ayishaa Sultan Khanam were some educated ladies during the age of Babur and Humayun.[25]

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19. Saqi, Mustad Khan, *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, tr. and annotated by Jadunath Sarkar, Royal Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1947, p. 322.
20. Jaffar, S.M., *Education in Muslim India*, Delhi, 1973, p. 297.
21. Khan, Shahnawaz, *The Maathir-ul-Umara*, vol. I, tr. H. Beveridge and Beni Prasad, Delhi, 1999, p. 261.
22. Jahangir, Nur-ud-din Muhammad, op.cit., vol. II, pp. 213-214.
23. Jaffar, S.M., *Education in Muslim India*, pp. 191-192.
24. Bhagi, M.L., op.cit., p. 361.
25. Begum, Gulbadan, op. cit., pp. 131-150 &194.

Akbar is famous for his keen interest in promoting education, among other contributions. He made excellent arrangements in this field, and appointed matrons.[26] In Mughal history, he is credited with founding a girl's school, for the first time at Fatehpur Sikri.[27] Shah Jahan did not neglect the education of his daughters. For this he appointed a Persian lady scholar, Sati-un-Nisa[28], as the Superintendent of Mumtaz's seraglio. It was she who, later on, became the Governess of princesses Roshan Ara and Jahanara.

Aurangzeb was deeply interested in the education of the ladies of the imperial harem. He himself supervised his daughter's education and academic progress. He had a firm belief, that to impart education was praiseworthy in the eyes of God. Therefore, he taught his princesses, all the necessary rules and other relevant doctrines of Islam. Under his strict guidance, all the ladies of the harem were engaged in the worship of God, reading and transcribing the Holy Quran, together with the performance of virtuous deeds.[29]

The ceremony of starting education was called 'Bismillah Khani' or '*Maktab*' ceremony.[30] It was observed only when a boy or a girl attained the age of four years four months and four days.[31]For this performance usually, an hour was fixed after consulting an astrologer.[32] For two or three days prior to the ceremony, the girl had to sit in a state of '*Manjha*', i.e. a ceremony of marriage. She was made to dress in yellow clothes, and '*suhagan*' women (only those, whose husbands were alive) rubbed a scented powder of special make known as '*ubtan*', over her body. This continued daily, morning and evening, till the day of '*Maktab*' ceremony. During this period Music was played in the house of the girl concerned, by professional lady singers.

On the occasion, the girl was bathed and dressed in new costly garments either of red or white colour. Gold or silver amulets were then hung on the girls's neck, and then

26. Monserrate, *Commentarius of father Monserrate*, on his journey to the court of Akbar, ed. J.S. Hoyland and annotated by S.N. Banerjee, New Delhi, 1992, p. 203.
27. Keay's, F.E., *Indian Education in Ancient and later times*, London, 1938, p. 203.
28. Law, N.N., *Promotion of Learning in India during Mohammadan Rule*, Delhi, 1973, p. 204.
29. Saqi, Mustad Khan, op. cit., pp. 318-319.
30. Ashraf, K.M., "*Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*", Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, vol. I, 1935, Article No. 4, p. 249.
31. Abul, Fazl,op.cit., vol. I, p. 519.
32. Ibid., vol. I, p. 519.

she was adorned with flower garlands. Here it is interesting to note that on this occasion, the girl's side locks were plaited, for the first time, with black silk strings.[33] Now the girl was presented before the tutor or a '*Mashaikh*' in the midst of the heavy gatherings of guests. A gold or silver plate, including a pen with inkstand, was placed before the girl. Fatiha was recited over the sweet dishes, prepared for this occasion, and the tutor would, then, write on the plate, with sandal wood the words, '*Bismillah-i-r-r-rahman-nir-raheem*[34] (i.e. I begin it in the name of Allah.) when this was over, the girl was ordered to lick it off, which she had to do accordingly. In rich families '*Alhamd*', the first chapter of the Holy Quran written on the gold or silver plate was repeated by the girl herself.[35] The poor generally used red paper for writing the verse of the Holy Quran. At the end, the girl was taught, to pronounced in succession, the whole of the ninety sixth chapter '*surah Iqra'* of Holy Quran, by the tutor.[36]

During the Mughal age, on having finished the Holy Quran, a day was celebrated with the same pomp and enthusiasm. This ceremony was called '*Khatam Quran'* or ceremony of finishing the Holy Quran.[37] When Aurangzeb's most accomplished daughter, Zeb-un-Nisa, finished the Holy Quran and memorized it by heart, Aurangzeb celebrated the day with great rejoicings, and the public offices of the state were remained closed for two days.[38] In course, the tutor was presented gifts of great value.

Thus numerous examples are available in respect of well educated ladies of the Mughals in India. Under the Mughals the aristocracy and nobility also had a healthy tradition of imparting education to their women folk. Here an attempt has been made to give a brief account of the educated Muslim ladies and their contribution to Persian and Indian literature.

Gulbadan Begum was talented daughter of Babur, a worthy sister of Humayun and the most respected paternal aunt of the emperor Akbar. She immortalized her name by writing '*Humayn Nama'* a valuable record of events that took place in the reign of Humayun. Though detailed information of her early life is not available, it is clear that

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33. Kausar, Zinat, *Muslim Women in Medieval India*, New Delhi, 1992, p. 149.
34. Ibid., p. 149.
35. Ali, Ashraf, *Behishti Zewar*, vol. VI, English tr. by Mohammad Masroor Khan, Delhi, 1979, p. 18.
36. Diwakar, R.R., *Bihar through the Ages*, January, 1959, p. 543.
37. Law, N.N., *Promotion of Learning in India during Mohammadan Rule*, Delhi, 1973, p. 200.
38. Sarkar, J.N., *Studies in Aurangzeb's Reign*, Calcutta, 1933-1939, p. 130.

she was born in 1523 A.D. to Dildar Begum.[39] In 1525 A.D. when Gulbadan was about two years old (shortly before her father left Kabul) she was adopted by Babur's most favourite wife, Maham Begum who reared and educated her.[40]

Gulbadan Begum was a woman of extraordinary talents, who appeared to have had an excellent education. In her person were combined great natural gifts with a rare variety of accomplishments. It is true that she was master of several languages[41], but she was highly accomplished in Persian and Turkish.[42] She was a lady of poetic temperament.[43] As was the fashion of the day, she utilized her leisure in composing beautiful poems. Therefore, undoubtedly, Gulbadan was the first literary gem of the Mughal age.[44]

Humayun's wife of his youth, Bega Begum, well known as Haji Begum, was an educated lady. She had profound knowledge of medicine and treatment also.[45] Bega Begum was keenly interested in patronizing education, and so when she built her husband's tomb near Delhi, she founded a 'madrasa' near it.[46] This once again confirms that she had keen interest in education from the very beginning. Akbar is said to have been much attached to her, and she was to him like a second mother.

Hamidah Bano Begum was famous for her sharp understanding, warm heart and elevated sentiments. She was intelligent and had profound knowledge of Islamic doctrines. '*Maasir-ul-Umrah*' refers to an important incident when Akbar's tutor Mulla Abdun-Nabi tore off Akbar's saffron coloured dress in open court only because it contravened Islamic rules. At this Akbar became furious and complained about it to his mother, Hamida Bano Begum. But in response she replied, "This will be a cause of salvation to you on the last day. Till the day of Resurrection they will tell how a poor Mulla dealt with the king of the age and how the king of happy angry submitted.[47]

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39. Begum, Gulbadan, op. cit., p. 1-2.
40. Ibid., p. 116.
41. Sahay, B.K., *Education and Learning under the Great Mughals, 1526-1707 A.D.*,, Bombay, p. 130.
42. Begum, Gulbadan, op. cit., p. 79.
43. Kausar, Zinat, op. cit., p. 152.
44. Jaffar, S.M., op. cit., p. 193.
45. Fazl Abul, *Akbarnama*, vol. III, pp. 107-108.
46. Banerjee, S.K., *Humayun Badshah*, vol. II, Oxford, Lucknow, 1941, p. 317.
47. Khan, Shahnawaz, *The Maathir-ul-Umara*, vol. I, tr. H. Beveridge and Beni Prasad, pp. 42-43.

Maham Anaga, the wet nurse of Emperor Akbar was a highly educated and distinguished lady. She was retained in charge of the harem[48] of Akbar till her death. She was keenly interested in the promotion of learning, patronized education with heart and soul, and spent her money and energy on it. For the promotion of learning she founded a 'Madrasa' at Delhi with a mosque attached to it, and gave it the name, '*Khair-ul-Manzil*'.[49]

Salima Sultan Begum was adorned with all good qualities. She was a highly cultured lady, possessed good taste in Persian literature and was a composer of Persian poems.[50] The collection of poems called 'Diwan' is of very high rank and still occupies an important place in Persian literature. She was very keen about reading books, and being a wife, she utilized Akbar's library[51], besides her own library.[52]

Jahan Begum was the most beautiful and highly educated daughter of Akbar's courtier. She was married to prince Danyal towards the end of 1598 A.D.[53] She was very generous and a great patron of learned scholars. She was also very respectful to saints and *Mashaikh*.[54] She had gained proficiency in the Holy Quran, and wrote a commentary on it.[55] For this Akbar rewarded her with 50,000 (fifty thousand) dinars.[56]

Dai Lado was the wet nurse of Emperor Jahangir. She was a great patron of learning. She founded a school of Lahore which was presided over by a learned scholar, named Maulvee Asmatullah.[57]

Nur Jahan gained proficiency in different branches of learning, such as music dancing, painting, sewing, cooking, decoration, riding, hunting and all fine arts. She was a highly educated lady with a mind singularly gifted and able. Skilled as was she in political matters, she was equally gifted in literature too. By these unique abilities she blossomed like a lovely flower, and her mind unfolded with the beauty of her face

48. Ibid., vol. I, p. 146; Fazl, Abul, *Akbarnama*, vol. II, p. 86.
49. Fazl, Abul, *Akbarnama*, vol. II, p. 313.
50. Fazl, Abul, *Ain-i-Akbari*,vol. I, pp. 321-322.
51. Badaoni, *Abdul Qadir, Muntakhab-ul Tawarikh*, vol. II, tr by Wolsely Haig, Lowe, Calcutta, Asiatic Society, 1925, Delhi, 1973, p. 389.
52. Rahman, Abdul, *Bazm Taimuriah*, vol. I, Azamgarh, 1973, p. 440.
53. Fazl, Abul, *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. I, p. 322
54. Rahman, Abdul, op.cit., p. 442.
55. Ibid.
56. A.M.A., Shustry, *Outlines of Islamic Culture*, Bangalore, 1950, p. 589.
57. Bhagi, L.M., op.cit., p. 353.

and figure. She was a highly cultured lady, well-versed in Persian and Arabic literature.[58] Nur Jahan also patronized several renowned poets of her age.[59] She had a great love for books, and collected a fine library of rich books. This beautiful Persian lady, with a quick understanding and piercing intellect was the greatest women of her time.

Mumtaz Mahal was an accomplished lady with a graceful face. Singularly gifted and highly educated, the lady was trained in the arts of music and painting. She acquired proficiency in Persian and Arabic literature.[60] She also had a poetic vein and composed poems in Persian.[61] Mumtaz, a highly cultured lady with political genius and administrative skill, often assisted her husband in the hard task of administering the empire.[62] Being a great patron of learning, she helped many scholars, poets and learned men. She was the mother of fourteen children and was always curious about their proper education.[63] Mumtaz was a generous and pious lady, and often spent her afternoon in charitable works along with her husband.

Sati-un-Nisa, a learned Persian lady, belonged to a family of scholars and physicians and by good fortune joined the service of Mumtaz Mahal.[64] She was gifted with an eloquent tongue and knowledge of etiquette and housekeeping. She advanced beyond other servants, and reached the rank of *Muhardar*[65] (seal keeper). For her charming manners, versatility, talents, higher education and profound literary taste she was appointed instructress to princess Begum Sahib.[66] Sati-un-Nisa was highly educated in Persian and Arabic. She was not only a good recite of the Holy Quran, but knew it by heart[67] (*Hafiza*). She possessed a political faculty and was renowned as 'the princess of poets'.[68] She acquired proficiency in Persian and could thoroughly understand Persian works of prose and poetry.[69] She also gained mastery in the art of

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58. Prasad, Beni, *History of Jahangir*, London, 1930, p. 158.
59. Rahman, Abdul, op.cit., p. 445.
60. Edward & Jarrett, HLO, *Mughal Rule in India*, 1962, p. 160.
61. Jaffar, S.M., *Education in Muslim India*, p. 195.
62. Choudhary, I.N., Mumtaz Mahal, *Journal of Islamic Culture*, Hyderabad, vol. XI, 1937, p. 373; Yazdani, G., 'Jahan Ara', *Jouranl of the Punjab Historical Society*, vol. III, 1912, p. 153.
63. Choudhary, J.N., Ibid., p. 374.
64. Khan, Shahnawaz, *The Maathir-ul-Umara*, vol. I, p. 260.
65. Rahman, Abdul, op.cit., p. 448.
66. Ibid., p. 443.
67. Ibid., p. 448.
68. Jaffar, S.M., *Education in Muslim India*, p. 197.
69. Lahori, Abdul Hamid, *Padshah Nama*, vol. 2, ed. Kabir-ud-din Ahmad and Abdul Rahim, *Bibliotheca Indica,* Calcutta, 1867-68, p. 629.

medicine and treatment, as she belonged to a family of physicians.[70] After the death of Mumtaz-uz-Zamani (Mumtaz Mahal) Shah Jahan, who appreciated her merit, made her Sadr-un-Nisa[71] (female Nazir of the harem).

Jahan Ara was the eldest daughter of Emperor Shah Jahan. She was very intelligent and interested in the pursuit of learning. For her education, Shah Jahan appointed a highly educated lady as her governess, Sati-un-Nisa. Under her supervision Jahan Ara was taught the Holy Quran and Persian, and very soon she gained proficiency in them. She was a genius in poetry[72] and composed poems in Persian.

Jahan Ara was also a patron of learning, and encouraged a number of scholars and fixed allowances and stipends for them.[73] She was keenly interested in history[74] and liked songs very much.[75] She was witty and generous and elevated to the rank of the first lady of the realm, 'Padshah Begum'.[76]

Zabinda, an accomplished lady, was Shah Jahan's fourth daughter like other princess of her time, she had poetical talents. She has to her credit a number of poems mystical in nature.[77] The poems are of a very high order.

Hafiza Maryam was a highly educated lady who knew the Holy Quran by heart, that's why she has been called *Hafiza*. She was also famous for the art of reciting the Holy Quran in an attractive way. The fragrance of her good qualities reached Aurangzeb gradually, and being impressed by her, he appointed her the tutor of his daughter Zeb-un-Nisa.[78] From her, Zeb-un-Nisa learnt to commit to memory the words of God and the practice of the accomplishments.[79]

Zeb-un-Nisa inherited a good intellect from her father, and from her very childhood she showed remarkable signs of literary pursuits. Aurangzeb himself guided her education. She was also taught by a number of tutors. Her first tutor was Roshan

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70. Khan, Shahnawaz, *The Maathir-ul Umara*, vol. I, pp. 260-261.
71. Lahori, Abdul Hamid, *Padshah Nama*, vol. II, p. 629.
72. Rahman, Abdul, *Bazm Timuriah*, pp. 448-452.
73. Law, N.N., *Promotion of Learning*, p. 203.
74. Jaffar, S.M., *Education in Muslim India*, p. 195.
75. Manucci, Niccolao, *Storia Do Mogor*, vol. I, pp. 218-219.
76. Ibid., vol. II, p. 127.
77. Jaffar, S.M., *Education in Muslim India*, p. 196.
78. Khan, Shahnawaz, *The Maathir-ul-Umara*, vol. I, p. 681.
79. Ibid., p. 681.

Ara.[80] Aurangzeb appointed a highly gifted and trained governess, Hafiza Maryam, for her. According to the Muslim custom Hafiza Maryam first taught her the Holy Quran.[81] As a result, Zeb-un-Nisa mastered the Holy Quran and recited it to her father when she was only seven years old. Aurangzeb expressed profound joy at this and gave her thirty thousand gold Mohars, as a reward of her diligence.[82] On this occasion a feast was arranged. Between the age of eight and twelve she studied Arabic and gained proficiency in it. Later on Shah Rustam Ghazi[83], an eminent scholar was appointed as her teacher. Aurangzeb's former teacher Mulla Jiwan also guided her for some time.[84] Under his instruction Zeb-un-Nisa was taught a number of books, and became master of Persian and Arabic prose and poetry. In her twenty first years Aurangzeb appointed Mulla Sayyed Ashraf Mazandrani as her tutor. She gained proficiency in theology and also cultivated a taste for poetry under him and so proved herself a gifted poetess.[85] In the beginning she tried her hand at Arabic and wrote a '*Qasidah*' but later on she started composing verses in Persian and proved a renowned poetess.

Zeb-un-Nisa was quite conversant in letter writing, and collection of her letters known as '*Zeb ul Manshaat*'[86] was seen by the author of '*Tazki-rat-ul-Gharib*' himself.[87] Aurangzeb appreciated the sweet literary style of her letters. She was fond of the art of calligraphy and, with the help of expert calligraphists of the age, she gained proficiency in it. She could write correctly '*nastaliq*', '*naskh*' and '*shikastah*'.[88] Her whole mind was centred on studying the leading books of the age, and she made herself a master in Mathematics, Astronomy, History and Law.[89]

Zeb-un-Nisa was keenly interested in '*Mushairah*' (poetical contest), and often organized it in her palace, and she herself relaxed behind a curtain.[90] She always tried

80. Nagar, Ishwar Das, *Fututiat-i-Alamgiri*, translated and edited by Tasneem Ahmad, 1978, p. 162.
81. Mohammad, Aslam, *Khwateen*, Delhi, November, 1951, p. 256.
82. Rahman, Abdul, *Bazm Taimuriah*, p. 455.
83. Zaib-un-Nisa, *Diwan-i-Makhfi*, tr. Maganlal and Jessie Duncan, London, 1913, p. 9.
84. Aslam, Mohammad, op.cit., p. 256.
85. Rahman, Abdul, *Bazm Taimuriah*, p. 456.
86. Ahmad, M.S., Zeb-un-Nisa and Diwan-i-Makhfi, *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, vol. XIII (1927), p. 42.
87. Hashmi, Ahmad Ali, *Makhzan-ul-Gharaib* M.No. 239, 240, Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library, Patna, p. 312.
88. Saqi, Mustaad Khan, *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, p. 322.
89. Zaib-un-Nisa, *The Diwan of Zaibun Nisa*, p. 8.
90. Kausar, Zinat, *Muslim Women in Medieval India*, p. 163.

to keep herself busy in dealing with outstanding problems of the court and in different Arts and crafts too.

Zinat-un-Nisa, the second daughter of Aurangzeb was also a highly cultured lady. From her very childhood, her learned father had taught her under his strict supervision. As a result she gained proficiency in Islamic doctrines.[91] She was also a composer of poems, like other princesses of the Mughal age. She also encouraged men of letters and fixed scholarships for them.[92] She was styled 'Begum Sahiba', after the accession of Bahadur Shah.[93]

Badr-un-Nisa, the third daughter of Aurangzeb and Nawab Bai was an educated lady, though not so highly educated as her sisters.[94] Under the guidance of her father, she memorized the Holy Quran.[95] She was greatly loved by Aurangzeb for her good character, manners and kind heartedness.

However, she had more inclination towards religion, which become deeper, when she memorized the Holy Quran and simultaneously when she attained the age of maturity. Since she had less inclination towards field of education other than religion, and was distinguished only because of this, her father loved her a lot.

It is remarkable to mention that in urban areas, marriages of Muslim girls were mostly celebrated when they reached the age of twelve or thirteen. So Terry refers, "they marry for the most part at the age of twelve or thirteen.[96] But if the parents of a girl could easily secure a suitable match, they preferred to marry her even at an earlier age. It is also noteworthy in such cases, that when the marriages of the girls were finished at a tender age, they were mostly left in their paternal home after Nikah ceremony till the marriageable age. The actual marriage ceremony and Rukhsati were performed when the bride and the bridegroom had attained the age of puberty.[97]

During the Mughal age of the evil practice of marriage at an early age was usually observed by Indian Muslims. In imperial families, however, marriages were solemnized when the girls completed the age of thirteen or fourteen and boys fifteen

91. Saqi, Mustaad Khan, *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, p. 323.
92. Elliot & Dawson: *History of India as told by its own Historians*, vol. VII, p. 197.
93. Khan, Shahnawaz, *The Maathir-ul Umara*, vol. I, p. 274.
94. Law, N.N., *Promotion of Learning*, p. 204.
95. Saqi, Mustaad Khan, *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, p. 323.
96. Foster, W., *Early Travels in India (1583-1619)*, p. 320-321.
97. Manucci, N. *Storia Do Mogar*, vol. III, tr. pp. 58-59.

or sixteen. Babur's daughter Gulrang's marriage took place in 1503 A.D. with Isan Timur on completion of her fifteenth year.[98] Likewise, another daughter, Gulchihra's marriage to Tukhta Bugha Khan was celebrated when she was fourteen years.[99] Gulbadan Begum's marriage was also contracted with Khizr Khwaja Khan not prior to fourteen years.[100] Arjumand Bano Begum was married to Shah Jahan, when she was 19 years five months and seven years old.[101]

Manucci also records that young princes were brought up in the palace, upto the age of 16 years and then they were to be married.[102] In this connection some marriages were performed at earlier age also. Babur's first marriage with Ayisha Sultan[103] appears to have taken place at the age of eleven. Bakhshi Banu Begum, daughter of Humayun and Gunwar Bibi, was given in marriage to Ibrahim when she was ten years old.[104]

However, the prevalent system of child marriage was not admirable. Abul Fazl remarks, "In the extensive country of India men are active to form this union at a tender age, and his introduces the leaven of evil".[105] It, therefore, clears that these were obstacles on the way of girl's progress, prosperity, the development of her mind and physical stability.

The evil resulting in the practice of child marriage did not escape the keen eyes of Akbar, who made laws in this connection to check the practice in question. Abul Fazl writes, "He abhors marriages which take place between men and women before the age of puberty. They bring forth no fruit and his Majesty thinks them even hurtful, for afterwards, when such a couple ripens into manhood, they dislike having connection and their home is desolate".[106] As the children born of early marriages were generally

98. Begum, Gulbadan, *Humayun Nama*, p. 232.
99. Ibid., p. 231.
100. Ibid., p. 31.
101. Qazwini, Muhammad Amin bin Abul Hassan, *Padshah Nama*, Persian Manuscript Buhar Collection National Library, Calcutta, p. 30.
102. Manucci, N., *Storia Do Mogor*, vol. II, p. 347.
103. Babur, Zahiruddin Muhammad, *Buburnama or Tuzuk-i-Baburi* tr. by Mrs. A.S. Beveridge, New Delhi, 1970, p. 120.
104. Begum, Gulbadan, *Humayunnama*, p. 214.
105. Fazl, Abul, *Akbarnama*, vol. III, p. 791.
106. Fazl, Abul, *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. I, p. 287 and vol. III, p. 448.

weak he forbade girls before fourteen and boys before sixteen years age to be married.[107]

There is no denying the fact that the unmatched marriages were the worst of all marriages. The Muslim girls of the period realized this and always tried to avoid such marriages. But they could not escape from this evil. Emperor Akbar was not in favour of this type of marriage and he passed a law that a man could not marry a girl more than twelve years younger to him[108] and vice versa. This shows that coming to the age of Akbar unmatched marriage was a common vice. Akbar for the first time, therefore, tried to check this bad system by enforcing this law in the country.

Muslim widows enjoyed a respectable position in society throughout Mughal period. Unlike Hindu, a Muslim widow was allowed to attend and enjoy the festivities of betrothal, Nikah and birth ceremonies. Mughal rulers never forbade their ladies to remarry; they encouraged widow remarriage by themselves marrying widows. As a result during the Mughal rule, widow remarriage was widely practiced by the rich and the poor alike. Manucci also refers to this custom thus, "since the law thus directed that the wives of a dead elder brother belonged to the living younger brother".[109] Under this custom Aurangzeb wished to marry Rana-i-Dil the widow of Dara but this marriage did not materialize.

During the Mughal period, polygamy was prevalent among both the upper and lower classes of Muslim society[110], though ordinarily it was not encouraged. People of lower classes were normally monogamists, and their lives usually had no rivals in their homes. But those with adequate economic stability could afford to indulge in the extravagant luxury of maintaining several wives.

Babur, the first Mughal Emperor had married seven wives. They were Aisha Sultan Begum, Zainab Sultan Begum, Maham Begum, Masuma Sultan Begum, Gulrukh Begum, Dildar Begum, Mubarika Bibi.[111] Humayun also had many legal wives. Among them Bega Begum, later on called Haji Begum, Bibi Gonoor, Chand Bibi,

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107. Badaoni, Abdul Qadir, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, vol. II, W.H. Lowe, Academica Asiatic (India) 1973, p. 315.
108. Badaoni, Abdul Qadir, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, vol. II, p. 405.
109. Manucci, N., *Storia Do Mogor*, vol. I, p. 361.
110. Thevenot, *Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri*, ed. By Surendra Nath Sen, New Delhi, 1949, p. 117.
111. Begum, Gulbadan, *Humayun Nama*, pp. 28, 29-30.

Shad Bibi, Gulbarg Begum, Mewa Jan, Hamida Bano Begum.[112] Abul Fazl has mentioned that Akbar had the following queens: Ruqayya Sultan Begum, Salima Sultan Begum, a daughter of Raja Bihari Mal, the first wife of Abdul Wasi, Bibi Daulat Shad, A daughter of Abdulla Khan Mughal, a daughter of Miran Mubarak Shah of Khandesh[113], Qismiya Bano, the daughter of Arab Shah entered the royal Harem a daughter of Qazi Isa, a daughter of Shamsuddin Chak.[114]

Jahangir also had several wives but four among them were the chief ones. Hawkins states, "He had three hundred wives whereof four be chief as queens to say the first named Padshah Banu, the second is called Noor Mahal, the third is the daughter of Seinchau (Zain Khan Koka), the fourth is the daughter of Hakim Hamaun".[115] Other wives of Jahangir were a daughter of Rai Singh Bhatta, Jagat Gosain, Sahib-i-Jamal, Karamsi, a daughter of Darya Malbhas, a sister of Mirza Muzaffar Hussian, Nur-un-Nisa[116], Malika-i-Jahan, a daughter of the ruler of Khandesh[117], a daughter of Sayyad Khan, a daughter of Mirza Sanjar, a daughter of Ram Chand Bundela.

Shah Jahan was also polygamous like his father and married many women like Qandhari Mahal, Arjumand Banu Begum, a daughter of Shah Nawaz Khan, Akbarabadi Mahal[118], Fatehpuri Mahal, Sarhindi Begum. Aurangzeb married more than four and he married one or two only after the death of his existing queens thus making the number four at a time. The legal wives of Aurangzeb are mentioned as such Dilras Bano, a daughter of king Raju of Rajori in Kashmir, given the name Rahmat un Nisa, Udaipuri Mahal, Hirfa Bai also called Zainabadi Mahal, Dil'aram and Daulatabadi Mahal are recorded as belonging to Aurangzeb's harem.[119]

Akbar was himself polygamous yet he was a great supporter of monogamy.[120] Abul Fazl says, "Nor does His Majesty approve of every one marrying more than one wife: for this ruins a man's health and disturbs the peace of home.[121] Badaoni also refers to Akbar's introduction of monogamy thus, that people should not have more than one

112. Ibid., p. 85.
113. Fazl, Abul, *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. I, pp. 321, 322.
114. Fazl, Abul, *Akbarnama*, vol. III, p. 167 & *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. I, p. 686.
115. Foster, W., *Early Travels in India*, p. 100.
116. Fazl, Abul, *Akbarnama*, vol. III, p. 964.
117. Ibid., p. 1063.
118. Faruki, Zahiruddin, *Aurangzeb and his time*, Delhi, 1972, p. 546.
119. Sarkar, J.N., *History of Aurangzeb*, Calcutta, vol. I, p. 63.
120. Badaoni, Abdul Qadir, *Muntkhab-ut-Tawarikh*, vol. II, pp. 211; Fazl, Abul, *Akbarnama*, vol. I, p. 13.
121. Fazl, Abul, *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. I, p. 288.

legal wife, unless he had no child. In another case the rule should be one man and one woman.[122]

In spite of this social reform, the practice of polygamy continued among the wealthy Mohammedans as Monserrate says, "He also invented and introduced amongst the Musalmans two forms of marriage, first that with regular consort, merely called wives and who may be as numerous as a man's resources allow.[123]

During the period under review the practice of concubine was prevalent among the richer sections of Muslim society. Mughal emperors and their nobles kept in their harem as many concubines as they desired, exclusive of their married wives. Polygamous persons had a number of concubines; each concubine tried her best to win the favour of her master. For this they not only adorned themselves beautifully but also used the best available perfumes and sweet scented ointments of the time.[124] In the evening they used a composition of pearl, gold, opium, Amber and other stimulants, as these produced a pleasant elevation of the spirit. In order to excite the lust of their masters they also encouraged them to use these intoxicants.[125] These concubines also served the master by driving flies away, rubbing his hands and feet and dancing and playing on musical instruments.[126] By means of attractive and fascinated presentation they sometimes gained the special favour of their masters, who would make them their legal wives.

During the Mughal age emperors kept a large number of concubines and for their selection, "Mina Bazar" was the best market. Manucci refers to it thus, "Many of them come out of the palace very rich and satisfied, while others continued to dwell there with the dignity of concubines.[127] The Mughal emperors and the nobles made fine arrangements for keeping their concubines in their harems. Each concubine was assigned a separate quarter to live in,[128] these concubines were seldom visited by their

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122. Badaoni, Abdul Qadir, *Muntakhab ut Tawarikh*, vol. II, p. 367.
123. Monserrate, S.J., *The Commentary of Father Monserrate*, p. 202.
124. Thevenot and Careri, "*Indian Tavels of Thevenot and Careri*", edited by Surendranath Sen, New Delhi, 1949, p. 247.
125. Pelsaert, Francois, *Jahangir's India*, translated by Moreland and Geyl, 1972, p. 65.
126. Ibid.
127. Manucci, N., *Storia do Mogor*, vol. I, p. 188.
128. De Laet, *Empire of the great Moghul*, translated by J.S. Hoyland and annotated by S.N. Banerjee, Bombay, 1975, p. 99.

master. Generally they were very faithful to their master and always tried to gain his favour and company.

The life of Muslim women under a polygamous husband was nothing but a pathetic tale, though they led a very luxurious life whose pomp, splendor and luxury could only be imagined by a common lady of the Mughal period. Their residences, well decorated and well furnished, were the picture of magnificence.

All means of entertainment were provided inside their quarters and lady singers and dancers tried their best to entertain them.[129] Not only that, but for their comfort fans were kept going steadily in the room or in the open air where they usually sat.[130] Besides, a number of slaves and maids were always kept ready to serve them. These ladies possessed many gold and silver vessels. Different varieties of dainty dishes prepared by cooks were served to them daily. In addition, they received a big amount[131] from their husbands every month for the expenses of costly clothes, ornaments, shoes, perfumes and betel. Thus they could afford whatever the desired viz., horses to ride on, male servants to attend on them outside the houses and female salves inside their houses.[132]

They were often very jealous of each other and tried their level best to gain favours of their husband but they never expressed their feelings in words before him as they feared to annoy the master. The mother having a son was always loved more and was supported by a husband. Fryer states that among the wives the senior wife commanded most respect, but the mother of the first son received more respect than others in the eyes of her lord.[133] Babur's beloved wife Bibi Mubarika could not bear any child due to the enoy of other wives who administered drugs to deprive her of motherhood and weaken her husband's (Babur's) affection.[134]

Due to their hostile relations they lived in separate quarters and dined privately, Pelsaert rightly remarks, "Their food comes from one kitchen but each wife takes it in

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129. Manucci, Niccolao, *Storia Do Mogor*, vol. II, pp. 338-341.
130. Pelsaert, Francois, *Jahangir's India*, p. 65.
131. De Laet, *Empire of the great Moghul*, pp. 90-91; Manucci, Niccolao, *Storia Do Mogor*, vol. II, pp. 338-341.
132. Pelsaert, Francois, *The Voyage of, to the East Indies*, translated by Alkbert Gray and H.C.P. Bell, London, p. 66.
133. Fryer, John and Roe, Sir Thomas, *Travels in India in the 17th century*, London, 1873, p. 132.
134. Tavernier, Jean Baptiste, *Travels in India*, New York, 1889, Vol. I, p. 393, Begum, Gulbadan, *Humayun Nama*, p. 266.

her own apartment far they hate each other secretly though they seldom or never a low it to be seen because of their desire to retain the favour of their husband, whom they fear, honour and worship as god rather than a man."[135]

It is noteworthy that the status of co-wife was inferior to that of the first wife, as the senior wife commanded most respect.[136] Generally co-wives had unfriendly and strained relations among themselves. When, the husband was partial towards a particular wife, her co-wives become more jealous, and tried to take revenge secretly. Jahangir was greatly attached to his wife Nur Jahan, so she was always a victim in the hands of Jodha Bai. Similarly Aurangzeb had a special liking for Udaipuri Mahal, so her co-wives were very jealous of her.[137] A husband's partiality for a particular wife and negligence to others also gave pain; one can easily imagine the heart burning when his favourite one accompanied him in visiting the court or some other place.[138]

Sometimes a neglected wife tried to draw the attention of her husband by means of costly dress, jewellery and perfumes and sweet anointments.[139] Infact whenever a number of co-wives lived together they found no mental peace because of the constant strife among themselves. All co-wives, from a queen to an ordinary slave, burned with jealousy. Sometimes the senior wife under a polygamous husband was neglected, while the maid servants were raising to the status of legal wives as a result illicit relations with the master. These slaves warmly welcomed the master in a befitting dress for the occasion and would "seem to fly, rather than run, about their duties".[140] To gain the master's sympathy they rubbed his body with pounded sandal wood and rose water and with some other scented and cooling oil.

Pelsaert has tried to show women's unsatisfied passion under a polygamous husband by writing thus, "these women wear indeed the most expensive clothes, eat the daintiest food and enjoy all worldly pleasures except one, and for that one they grieve saying they would willingly give everything in exchange for a beggar's poverty.[141] A

135. Pelsaert, Francois, *Jahangir's India*, p. 65.
136. Pelsaert, Francois, *Jahangir's India*, p. 64.
137. Manucci, Niccolao, *Storia Do Mogor*, vol. II, p. 107.
138. Pelsaert, Francois, *The Voyage of, to the East Indies*, p. 66.
139. Pelsaert, Francois, Ibid. p. 65, Manucci, Niccolao, *Storia Do Mogor*, vol. II, p. 352.
140. Pelsaert Francois, *The Voyage of, to the East Indies*, p. 65.
141. Pelsaert, Francois, Ibid., p. 56.

women's life was unstable and miserable in the presence of other co-wives, because in the household of the polygamists the God of quarrels reigned supreme.[142]

The royal ladies of the Mughal harem had a lavish lifestyle. The important harem ladies owned a lot of wealth and money which they spent as they wished. As Manucci says, "these queens and princesses have pay or pensions according to their birth or the rank they hold. In addition, they often received from the king special presents in cash, under the pretext that it is to buy betel, or perfumes, or shoes.[143]

A part from their regular allowances some important ladies of the Mughal household owned vast *jagirs* bestowed upon them by the emperor. Soon after his accession, Humayun paid a visit to his mother, sister and other ladies of his seraglio and he gave those *jagirs* and confirmed their *mansabs.*[144] Jahangir mentions in his memoirs that he "increased the allowances of all the veiled ladies of my father's harem from twenty per cent to hundred per cent, according to their condition and relationship"[145], after his coming to the throne in 1605 A.D. The maximum numbers of jagirs, during his reign were owned by Nur Jahan Begam. Shah Jahan too bestowed a lot of *jagirs* on his ladies and Manucci says that during his reign all the ladies of rank had their own *nazirs* who looked after their *jagirs* on his ladies and Manucci says that during his reign all the ladies of rank had their own *nazirs* who looked after their *jagirs*, properties and incomes.[146] The largest numbers of *jagirs* were given by Shah Jahan to his eldest daughter prince Jahan Ara.[147]

It is quite evident that the royal Mughal ladies had a lot of wealth in their hands. The more important place she occupied in the emperor's life, the wealthier she was. As a result they earned lakhs and lakhs of rupees apart from the gold, silvers, gems, jewelry and other costly articles they owned. On Shah Jahan's accession ten lakh rupees were fixed as the annual allowance of Mumtaz Mahal, Jahan Ara Begum's annual allowance was fixed at six lakh rupees.[148] Manucci estimated Jahan Ara Begum's income to thirty lakh rupees annually apart from the precious stones and

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142. Ojha, P.N., *North Indian Social Life*, Patna, 1961, p. 133.
143. Manucci, Niccolao, *Storia Do Mogor*, vol. II, p. 341.
144. Begum, Gulbadan, *Humayun Nama*, p. 24.
145. Jahangir, Nur-ud-din Muhammad, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, vol. I, p. 10.
146. Manucci, Niccolao, *Storia Do Mogor*, vol. II, p. 328.
147. Mukherjee, Soma, *Royal Mughal Ladies and their Contributions*, New Dlehi, p. 31.
148. Inayat Khan, *Shahjahan Nama,* translated and edited, W.E. Begley and Z.A. Desai, Delhi, 1990, p. 18.

jewels owned by her.[149] Totally it amounted to nearly three million rupees.[150] Shah Jahan continued to give Nur Jahan Begum an annual maintenance allowance of two lakh rupees when he came to the throne.[151]

Humayun's mother Maham Begum on the occasion of Humayun's accession to the throne in 1530 A.D. arranged for a grand feast and gave special robes of honour to about seven thousand persons.[152] Nur Jahan Begum was well known for arranging grand feast and bestowing costly gifts on others. When Prince Khurram (Shah Jahan) came back from his successful Rajputana campaign, he was presented a rich dress of honour a jeweled sword, a horse and saddle and an elephant by Nur Jahan Begum.[153]

The royal life in the Mughal harem and cultural heritage bears testimony to the economic affluence and prosperity of the Mughal age which was one of the most glorious periods of Indian history. The Mughal Empire witnessed developments in all spheres of economy which included agriculture, internal and external trade, commerce and industries, banking and currency. The Mughal ladies took a lot of interest in this field and participated actively in the economic scenario of the Mughal Age. Though too many royal ladies of the Mughal harem did not actively participate in the economic field, yet there were distinguished ladies of that time, like Jahangir's mother Mariyam-uz-Zamani, Nur Jahan Begum, and Shah Jahan's daughter princess Jahan Ara, who are known to have taken an active participation in the trade and commerce of that time.[154]

Akbar's wife and Jahangir's mother Mariyam uz Zamani, was greatly interested in trade and commerce of her time and was the first royal Mughal lady who participated directly in it. She had her own ships and carried on brisk trade from the Surat port to various ports on the Red Sea. One of her ships was the famous Rahimi of Surat.[155] Sir Thomas Roe also mentioned Mariyam uz Zamani's ships in his account.[156]

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149. Manucci, Niccolao, *Storia Do Mogor*, vol. I, p. 216.
150. Ibid., p. 216.
151. Lahori, Abdul Hamid, *Badshah Nama*, vol. I, Part I, pp. 96-97.
152. Begum, Gulbadan, *Humayun Nama*, p. 114.
153. Jahangir, Nur-ud-din Muhammad, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, vol. I, p. 278.
154. Mukherjee Soma, *Royal Mughal Ladies and their Contributions*, New Delhi, p. 236.
155. Sarkar, J.N., *Studies in Economic Life in Mughal India*, Delhi, 1975, p. 275.
156. Foster, William, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe in India*, London, 1936, pp. 74, 387-88.

One of Jahangir's wives Jagat Gosain did not contribute directly towards the economic field, but she is said to have founded a village called Sohagpura. This village was a famous manufacturing centre for fine bangles of glass which were quite popular and considered auspicious by unmarried and married ladies.[157]

Nur Jahan Begum carried on sea trade with foreign lands with a lot of enthusiastic vigour. She owned a number of ships. Her chief agent in her activities concerning foreign trade was her brother Asaf Khan.[158] Her ships too operated between Surat and the Arabian coasts. Nur Jahan was a very intelligent woman. She realized that the rivalry and tensions that existed between the Mughals and the Portuguese would prevent her ships from taking her goods to foreign lands. So she tried to favour the English so she could send her goods out on English ships.[159]

Nur Jahan Begum also took an active interest in internal trade. Through the river Jamuna in Agra, a number of articles manufactured in Agra were sent to other parts of the country and similarly many articles of trade and commerce entered Agra through this route Pelsaert, while describing the city of Agra in his accounts, wrote that Nur Jahan Begum had offices there which "collect duties on all these goods before they can be shipped across the river and also on innumerable kinds of grain, butter and other provisions which are produced in the Eastern provinces, and imported thence".[160]

During the reign of Shah Jahan, his eldest daughter Jahan Ara Begum was the only royal Mughal lady who took an active interest and participated wholeheartedly in the prosperous trade and commerce of that time. Jahan Ara Begum invested her wealth in conducting brisk foreign trade and also got back in return huge profits. She owned a large number of ships and established friendly commercial relations with the Dutch and the English. Their co-operation helped her to carry on extensive trade and make huge profits.[161] Manucci estimates her income to thirty lakhs of rupees a year apart from the precious stones and jewels owned by her.[162] The most famous and largest of Jahan Ara Begum's ships was called Sahebi. This ship Sahebi was used by the princes

157. Kausar, Kabir and Kabir, Inamul, *Biographical Dictionary of Prominent Muslim Ladies*, New Delhi, 1982, p. 151.
158. Pant, D., *The commercial Policy of the Mughals*, Bombay, 1930, 166.
159. Ibid., p. 165.
160. Pelsaert, Francisco, *Jahangir's India*, p. 4.
161. English Factory Records (1642-1645), pp. 11-12, 50 (1646-1650), pp. 219-20.
162. Manucci, Niccolao, *Storia Do Mogor*, vol. I, p. 216.

for profits as well as to assist Haj pilgrims.[163] Another ship by the name of Gunjawar, which originally belonged to Shah Jahan was given by him to Princess Jahan Ara in December 1629 A.D., along with the instruments, valuables, drugs and material. It also operated from Surat.[164]

Mughal miniatures are court paintings and these are confined to the life of court, and the greater part of the story of the people in general remains untold.[165] Numerous visual and literary records provide us some information about day to day life of ordinary women in Mughal society.

Numerous miniatures painting showing the village life: women at village well[166], women pulling water from the well[167], women churning butter, activity of daily life of villagers[168], Razmnama painting showing various village activities, women carrying water with earthen pots pitcher (ghara). All these miniature paintings of Mughal period give us a visual record of social life and manners of the villager depicted in the miniatures.

Parda was observed mainly by the rich ladies and was not so rigid with the common ladies.[169] Abundant references of the observance of *Parda* are found in the accounts of contemporary foreign travelers.[170] Parda was mainly confined to the rich and well to do classes.[171] Poor women, especially in villages, worked in fields and could not afford to observe *parda.*[172]

As regards the education of common women, girls belonging to middle class family did not receive much education. Some of them visited schools, run in private houses by some elderly ladies. Sometimes the father of the girl also acted as her teacher. Girls of the poor family were almost left illiterate except a few who were collected and sometimes given instructions by the Mullas of the mosque or by some Pandits in

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163. Moosvi, Shireen, "Mughal Shipping at Surat in the First Half of 17th Century", *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 51st Session, Calcutta, 1990, p. 312.
164. Ibid., p. 311.
165. Verma, S.P., *Art and Material Culture in the Painting of Akbar Court*, Delhi, 1978, p. XXVIII.
166. Verma, S.P., *India at Work in Sculpture and Paitning*, Aligarh, 1994, pl. V.
167. Leach, L.Y., *Mughal and Other Paintings from the Chester Beatty Library*, London, 1995, vol. I, p. 225, Fig. 2.74.
168. Das, A.K., *Dawan of Mughal Painting*, Bombay, 1982, pl. VII.
169. Manucci, Niccolao, *Storia Do Mogor*, vol. I, 62.
170. Tavernier, Jean, Baptiste, *Travels in India*, vol. I, p. 181.
171. Bernier, Francois, *Travels in the Mogal Empire* (1656-68), Oxford, 1934, p. 413.
172. De Laet, *Empire of the Great Mughals*, p. 81.

Pathshalas. The subjects of studies were mainly domestic science such as needle work, embroidery, cooking and household work.[173] On the whole, the education of common women was not widespread. There were no regular and separate schools for them. Boys and girls in the early years studied together, but even that seems doubtful due to the strict *parda* system prevalent in those days.

Widow Remarriage was hardly practiced and sati was considered by the Hindus as an act of chastity. *Sati* practice was checked and no woman could burn herself without the prior permission of the governor and in no case a widow was burn against her wishes.[174]

Sati is an ancient institution and custom of the India. *Sati*[175] was sure means of reunion of wife with her dead husband. The greatest tragedy in the life of a Hindu woman was the death of her husband. A widow had to burn herself with the dead body of her husband or had to lead a life of suffering and misery and was treated with contempt by the other member of the family.

Society looked down upon the widows who did not perform *sati*. They were not allowed to grow their hair long or to put on ornaments and good dresses. Widowhood was considered a punishment of the sins of previous lives. Almost all the foreign travelers who visited India during the Mughal period mention that women used to burn themselves with the dead body of their husband. Still there were many ladies who refused to perform it.[176] Travernier described "the custom among the gentiles of burning bodies of after death is very ancient, they generally burn them on the bank of rivers, where they wash the bodies of the deceased to complete the clearing of those sins from which they have not been purified during life, a living woman to be burnt in the fire together with the body of her deceased husband".[177] Monsorret also refers that, the wives of the Brahmans a famous class of nobly born Hindu are accustomed. in accordance with an ancient tradition of their religion to burn themselves on the same pyres as their dead husband.[178]

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173. Misra, Rekha, *Women in Mughal India*, Delhi, 1967, p. 138.
174. Bernier, Francois, *Travels in the Mogal Empire (1656-68)*, p. 306.
175. Foster, W., *Early Travels in India (1583-1619)*, 1968, Delhi, p. 119; Ahmad, Nizamuddin, *Tabqat-i-Akbari*, vol. III, 1992, p. 346.
176. Pelsaert, Francois, *Jahangir's India*, p. 80.
177. Tavernier, J.B., *Travels in India*, vol. II, pp. 161-162.
178. Monserrate, F.A., *Commentary of father Monserrate on his journey to the court of Akbar*, p. 61.

Prince Daniyal watches as the flames consume the *sati* and her dead lover.[179] This lovely little manuscript is attributed to about 1630, with three ministers. This miniature showing the meeting of lovers on the pyre watched by Daniyal, are in subdued *nimqalam* (badly painted) style that heightens their photos. The final scene is especially effective, the solidity of the workers contrasting with the faintness of two figures in the pyre, already etherealized by their passion. In medieval India, the custom of *sati* gained an upper hand. It required the widow to burn herself to death on the funeral pyre of her husband. Usually she was expected to follow her dead husband to the other world by immolating herself on the funeral pyre of her husband. In such a case she was greatly honored and praised as the idol of Indian womanhood. If she did not commit *sati* or the act of self immolation, then she was, as noted above, condemned to a life of humiliation.

Akbar issued an order that a woman should not be freed to *sati*.[180] Jahangir also prohibited *sati*. Aurangzeb also disallowed women to be burnt.[181] We learn from Manucci that the emperor (Aurangzeb), on his return from Kashmir (December 1663 A.D.) issued an order that in all lands Mughals control never again should the official sallow a woman to be burnt. This order endures to this day.[182] This humanitarian rule is also mentioned in the official manuals of his reign.

The custom of Jauhar was more or less confined to the gallant Rajputs.[183] Abul Fazl refers to this fatal custom performed by the Rajput of Chittor, on its fall, thus, "for it is an Indian custom that when such a calamity has occurred a piti is made of sandalwood, alone etc., as large as possible and to add this, dry firewood and oil. Then they leave hard hearted confidents in charge of their women. As soon as it is certain that there has been a defeat and that the men have been killed, these subborn ones reduce the innocent woman to ashes".[184] Jauhar, in fact, refers to the high standard of womanly honour maintained among the brave Rajputs.

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179. Lasty, J.P., *The Art of the book in India*, London, 1982, Plate 81, Fig. 17, p. 98.
180. Badaoni, Abdul Qadir, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, vol. II, p. 388.
181. Thevenot, Monsieur De, *Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri*, p. 120.
182. Manucci, Niccolao, *Storia do Mogor*, p. 97.
183. Tod, James, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan or the central and western Rajput states of India* ed. With and notes by William Crooke, London, 1920, vol. II, p. 744-746, vol. I, pp. 363, 381.
184. Fazl, Abul, *Akbarnama*, vol. II, p. 472; Fazl, Abul, *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. III, p. 358.

Epilogue

The proposed thesis seeks to present a different picture regarding the depiction of women in Mughal India. The great mass of textual and archaeological source material available to us enable to reconstruct a plausible picture of social life of women in Medieval India, the women's history of the period remain largely unexplored for the want of adequate source of information. Official chronicles and other historical account concern with this aspect only to the extent of giving biographical notes or at most with the fine art, especially poetry. All these fragmentary evidence are hardly helpful us in the way of construction a wholesome view.

In the absence of textual evidence nothing can be of greater value than contemporary painting for the purpose. More than any amount of words the visual experience acquired through this medium provided us in illustrated from the knowledge of a variety of those things that a chronicler would never think of as worthy of report. Fortunately the Mughal period is the richest in this respect. The Mughal kings maintained a whole establishment of painters. A good many of these have been lost yet those that we have, provided us with ample ground for studding the culture of the time.

There are many miniatures in which women have been depicted as central part of social life. These paintings includes but of goddess in Sarnath sculptures. dark princess, dying princess, flying Apsara in Ajanta cave paintings, Budda and Jaina manuscripts depict folios from Prajnaparamita and Kalpasutra, Ragmala series depicts lalit Ragini, Asavari Ragini, lovers etc. These miniature paintings are also helpful for the study of social life like birth celebration of Humayun, Salim, celebration of Holi, woman is playing polo, Laila and Majnun at school etc. The Rajasthani paintings of Madhumadhavi Ragini, Hindola Raga, Bengali Ragini, Krishna and his wife are also a good source material for the study of present topic. Women laborers' carrying building material, young girl pulling water from the well are also some important Mughal paintings for the study of common women folk. Nevertheless all these painting provided us with a good source for the study of the life of women. However, such a study will be of a very general in nature.

Sculpture has played an important role in Indian society, religious and secular requirements such as the ornamentation of items of luxury as well as objects of daily use. The human and animal figures show a high degree of finish and excellence and disclose an advance stage of development of art in the Indian history.

Ajanta caves are richly decorated with paintings. These paintings mostly depict the stories of the Buddha's past lives as described in the *Jatakas* and *Avadanas*. The treaties provide exhaustive details of methods used in the rendering of different kind of people, animals and landscapes. Ajanta's creative genius lies in the portrayal of women. The lovely ladies of the courts with their handmaids, the dancers and the musicians, the devotees, the common women and even the beggar girls are all drawn with extraordinary knowledge.

During the Ancient period the activities of womenwere confined within certain spheres principally the domestic social and religious. The religious status of women was as high as that of men. The position of the wife was an honored one in the family. The widow remarriage also prevailed in Vedic society. A woman could marry again probably in the life time of her husband. A husband cannot divorce his wife without her consent. Sati was also performed during that period. The women of ancient period also worked as *ganikas, pratiganikas, rupajivas, vesyas, dasis, devadasis, pumscalis, silpakarikas, kausikastri* etc. These women were to be given pension by the state in old age.

By the eleventh century the Buddhists in the monasteries of eastern India and the Jains in the west and south had begun to illustrate some of their religious books. These books were made of bound palm leaf folios. In the northwest region birch bark was preferred to palm leaves. Both palm leaf and birch bark books were provided with wood covers. These paintings provide rich source material of study, which depicts important scenes of Buddha and Jaina literature.

The subject of the Malwa illustrations in the seventeenth century, for example, the *Ragmala*, the *Krishnalila*, the *Nayikabheda*, the *Durgapatha*, etc. were especially popular. The *Ragmala* series is an extension of the Sultanate tradition including the *Charupanchasika* style. In *Ragmala* paintings the human figures are usually slow moving. The *Rasikapriya* miniatures reveal a number of characteristics such as typical regional dress, including short *choli* (bodice) on the women is shown; the skirt are

generally made from a striped cloth. The tall and slender figures and the naturalistic treatment of their faces obviously attempt to neutralize, the force of the older form. The traditional knowledge of portraying love illustrations was fully utilized in the *Nayikabheda* paintings of the Malwa School. These miniatures reproduced here, the main interest lies in the idealized setting of the blossoming trees and the sensitive movement of highly accomplished vines, both of which produce a sublime effect of light and shade.

The Mughal women were beautiful, educated and talented. They contributed towards the social, cultural, literary and artistic fields. They also expand their time in music, dancing, fine arts, religion and literary activities. Many Mughal paintings depict their contribution in the arrangement of dinner party, excursion, marriage of east, picnics, garden parties, drinking and drug parties and birthday celebrations. Mughal women participated in various indoor and outdoor games. They took part in *chaupar*, *chandal mandal*, cards, and chess, hunting and shooting.

In medieval India female education was not encouraged. It was a privilege confined to the ladies of royal family. Several social factors like *parda* system, child marriage and low position that women generally occupied, played a great role in the low level of education among women. Some women poetesses like Gulbadan Begum, and her sister Gulrukh Begum, Sultan Salima Begum, Nur Jahan Begum and Jahan Ara Begum are not considered equal to their male counterparts.

Princesses were taught to live in *parda*. It meant living in seclusion or behind a screen or at least covering of the face by veil. The rich and magnificent setting in which *palki* (*palanquins*) and *chandols* have been presented would make one fell that they were favorite conveyances of aristocratic women. There was another short of littersuspended between small elephant or camels. Women of the middle and lower class had to content themselves with the *Doli* which looked like *palki* but was much smaller in size and could accommodate only one person.

The Rajasthani paintings furnish a rich data useful for a social historian about dress, fashions, religion, climate cultural trends, ideals of beauty, pleasure etc. of an age in which painting is drawn. Paintings from Jodhpur, Bundi, Mewar and Chawand are related to music and amusement. Pahari paintings also depict theme of music and

dance. Music was a principal interest and almost every court has singing girls and musicians.

It has been revealed that there was a significant participation of women in all spheres of work, in Medieval India. The household is a site of work and involves a large number of activities, in all which women predominate. Here she was endowed with so called natural activities that are of cooking food, tending cattle, bringing water, taking care of children and old, so on. These are treated as external to the productive domain. The patriarchal perception allows the society to usurp women's labor without offering them anything in return.

Likewise in the manufacturing sector, spinning was exclusively women's job though evidence to their participation in weaving is not altogether absent. At another level the close relationship between family and commerce came to involve women in mercantile activities, as well. We have seen throughout how women helped in reshaping mercantile fortunes. Several women earned their livelihood through participation in entertainment activities. The dancing women were yearned for at festivities. The female guards were appointed inside the harem to look after the women of aristocracy. The common women worked outside the home to wash clothes, carrying brick and stone etc. Women were an important part of this labor group. She also worked as painter. Nadira Banu, Sahifa Banu, Ruqiya Banu and Nini were some important female Mughal painters.

The daughters of the Mughal family or the Mughal princesses occupied places of great honor in the seraglio. During the Mughal age of the evil practice of marriage at an early age was usually observed by Indian Muslims. Some marriages were performed at earlier age also. Muslim widows enjoyed a respectable position in society throughout Mughal period. Mughal rulers encouraged widow remarriage by themselves marrying widows. Polygamy was prevalent among both the upper and lower classes of Muslim society, though ordinarily it was not encouraged. The practice of concubinage was prevalent among the richer sections of Muslim society. Mughal emperors and their nobles kept in their harem as many concubines as they desired.

It is noteworthy that the status of co-wife was inferior to that of the first wife, as the senior wife commanded most respect. Sometimes a neglected wife tried to draw the

attention of her husband by means of costly dress, jewelry and perfumes and sweet an ointments. A women's life was unstable and miserable in the presence of other co-wives, because in the household of the polygamists the God of quarrels reigned supreme.

The important harem ladies owned a lot of wealth and money. Some important ladies of the Mughal household owned vast *jagirs*. JagatGosai founded a village called Sohagpura. NurJahan Begum carried on sea trade with foreign lands. During the reign of Shah Jahan, Jahan Ara Begum also took an active interest and participated wholeheartedly in the prosperous trade and commerce of that time.

The custom of *sati*, was as greatly in vague in Hindu society, as well as *jouhar* (massacre of women or even of battle) too. *Jouhar*, custom was greatly vogue in Rajput society in medieval times. Widow remarriage was hardly practiced and sati was considered by the Hindus as an act of chastity. Mughal emperors like Akbar and Jahangir prohibited *sati*.

Lastly medieval Indian paintings often provide rich and varied fare on social life of women, for which the literary sources offer comparatively poor evidence.

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